A

HISTORY

OF THE

LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BY

WASHINGTON IRVING.

> Venient annis
> Sæcula seris, quibus Oceanus
> Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens
> Pateat tellus, Typhisque novos
> Detegat Orbes, nec sit terris
> Ultima Thule.
>
> *Seneca, Medea.*

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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THE

LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

COLUMBUS.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS ON HIS SECOND VOYAGE. DISCOVERY OF THE CARIBBEE ISLANDS.

[1493.]

THE departure of Columbus on his second voyage of discovery, presented a brilliant contrast to his gloomy embarkation at Palos. On the 25th of September, at the dawn of day, the bay of Cadiz was whitened by his fleet. There were three large ships of heavy burden *, and fourteen caravels, loitering with flapping sails, and awaiting the signal to get under weigh. The harbour re-

* Peter Martyr says they were carracks (a large species of merchant vessel, principally used in coasting trade), of one hundred tons burden, and that two of the caravels were much larger than the rest, and more capable of bearing decks from the size of their masts. Decad. 1, lib. i.

sounded with the well-known note of the sailor, hoisting sail, or weighing anchor; a motley crowd were hurrying on board, and taking leave of their friends in the confidence of a prosperous voyage and triumphant return. There was the high-spirited cavalier, bound on romantic enterprise; the hardy navigator, ambitious of acquiring laurels in these unknown seas; the roving adventurer who anticipates everything from change of place and distance; the keen calculating speculator, eager to profit by the ignorance of savage tribes; and the pale missionary from the cloister, anxious to extend the dominion of the church, or devoutly zealous for the propagation of the faith. All were full of animation and lively hope. Instead of being regarded by the populace as devoted men, bound upon a dark and desperate enterprise, they were contemplated with envy, as favoured mortals, destined to golden regions and happy climes, where nothing but wealth, and wonder, and delights awaited them. Columbus moved among the throng, conspicuous for his height and for his commanding appearance. He was attended by his two sons Diego and Fer-

nando, the eldest but a stripling, who had come to witness his departure *, proud of the glory of their father. Wherever he passed, every eye followed him with admiration, and every tongue praised and blessed him. Before sunrise the whole fleet was under weigh; the weather was serene and propitious, and as the populace watched their parting sails brightening in the morning beams, they looked forward to their joyful return laden with the treasures of the New World.

According to the instructions of the sovereigns, Columbus steered wide of the coasts of Portugal and of its islands, standing to the south-west of the Canaries, where they arrived on the 1st of October. After touching at the Grand Canary, they anchored on the 5th at Gomera, where they took in a supply of wood and water for the voyage. Here also they purchased calves, goats, and sheep, to stock the island of Hispaniola; and eight hogs, from which, according to Las Casas, the infinite number of swine was propagated, with which the Spanish settlements in the New World subsequently abounded. A number of domestic

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 44.

fowls were likewise purchased, which were the origin of the species in the New World, and the same might be said of the seeds of oranges, lemons, bergamots, melons, and various orchard fruits *, which were thus first introduced into the islands of the west, from the Hesperides or Fortunate Islands of the Old World †.

On the 7th, when about to sail, Columbus gave to the commander of each vessel a sealed letter of instructions, in which was specified his route to the harbour of Nativity, the residence of the cacique Guacanagari. This was only to be opened in case of being separated by accident, as he wished to make a mystery, as long as possible, of the exact route to the newly-discovered country, lest adventurers of other nations, and particularly the Portuguese, should follow in his track, and interfere with his enterprises ‡.

After making sail from Gomera, they were

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i., cap. 83.

† Mons. de Humboldt is of opinion that there were wild oranges, small and bitter, as well as wild lemons, in the New World prior to the discovery. Caldcleugh mentions also that the Brazilians consider the small bitter wild orange of native origin.—Humboldt Essai Politique sur l'Isle de Cuba, t. i., p. 68.

‡ Las Casas, M. Sup.

becalmed for a few days among the Canaries, until, on the 13th of October, a fair breeze sprang up from the east, which soon carried them out of sight of the island of Ferro. Columbus held his course to the south-west, intending to keep considerably more to the southward than in his first voyage, in hopes of falling in with the islands of the Caribs, of which he had received such vague and wonderful accounts from the Indians*. Being in the region of the trade winds, the breeze continued fair and steady, with a quiet sea and pleasant weather, and by the 24th they had made four hundred and fifty leagues west of Gomera, without having seen any of those fields of sea-weeds which they had encountered within a much less distance on their first voyage, when their appearance had been so important, and almost providential, inspiring continual hope, and enticing them forward in their dubious enterprise. Now they needed no such signals, they were full of confidence and lively anticipation, and on seeing a swallow circling about the ships, and being visited occa-

* Letter of Dr. Chanca.

sionally by sudden showers, they began to look out cheerily for land.

Towards the latter part of October they were alarmed in the night by one of those sudden gusts of heavy rain, which are accompanied, in the tropics, with intense lightning and tremendous peals of thunder. It lasted for four hours, and they considered themselves in much peril, until they beheld several of those lambent flames playing about the tops of the masts, and gliding along the rigging, which are occasionally seen about tempest-tossed vessels during a highly electrical state of the atmosphere. These singular phenomena occurring in such awful times of gloom and peril, have always been objects of superstitious fancies among sailors. Fernando Columbus records their present appearance, and makes remarks on them strongly characteristic of the age in which he lived. On the same Saturday, in the night, was seen St. Elmo, with seven lighted tapers, at the topmast: there was much rain and great thunder; I mean to say, that those lights were seen which mariners affirm to be the body of St. Elmo, on beholding which

they chanted many litanies and orisons, holding it for certain, that in the tempest in which he appears, no one is in danger. Be that as it may, I leave the matter to them; but if we may believe Pliny, similar lights have sometimes appeared to the Roman mariners during tempests at sea, which they said were Castor and Pollux, of which likewise Seneca makes mention *.

On the evening of Saturday, the 2nd of November, Columbus was convinced from the colour of the sea, the nature of the waves, and the variable winds and frequent showers, that they must be near to land; he gave orders, therefore, to take in sail, and to maintain a vigilant watch throughout the night. He had judged with his usual sagacity. As the morning dawned, a lofty island was descried to the west, at the sight of which there were shouts of joy throughout the fleet. Columbus gave to the island the

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 45. A similar mention is made of this nautical superstition in the voyage of Magellan. During these great storms, they said that St. Elmo appeared at the topmast with a lighted candle, and sometimes with two, upon which the people shed tears of joy, receiving great consolation, and saluted him according to the custom of mariners. He remained visible for a quarter of an hour, and then disappeared, with a great flash of lightning, which blinded the people. Herrera, decad. 2, l. iv., c. 10.

name of Dominica, from having discovered it on Sunday. As the ships moved gently onward, other islands rose to sight one after another, emerging as it were from the quiet ocean, covered with verdant forests, while great flights of parrots, and other tropical birds, were winging their way from one to the other.

The crews were now assembled on the decks of the several ships, to return thanks to God for their prosperous voyage, and their happy discovery of land, and the *Salve Regina* and other anthems were chanted by the mariners throughout the armada. Such was the pious manner in which Columbus celebrated all his discoveries, and which, in fact, was generally observed by the Spanish and Portuguese voyagers. It certainly presents a solemn and beautiful picture to the mind; this congregation of mariners uniting, as it were, in a Sabbath jubilee on the tranquil bosom of the deep, and sending up swelling anthems of praise to heaven for the fair land that was rising to their view.

CHAPTER II.

TRANSACTIONS AT THE ISLAND OF GUADALOUPE.

[1493.]

The islands among which Columbus had arrived, were a part of that beautiful cluster called by some the Antilles, which sweep almost in a semicircle from the eastern end of Porto Rico to the coast of Paria on the southern continent, forming a kind of barrier between the main ocean and the Caribbean sea.

During the course of the first day that he entered this archipelago, Columbus saw no less than six islands of different magnitude, clothed in that majestic vegetation peculiar to the tropics; and whenever the breeze passed over them, the whole air was sweetened by the fragrance of their forests.

After seeking in vain for good anchorage at Dominica, he stood for another of the group, to which he gave the name of his ship, Marigalante. Here he landed, displayed the royal banner, and

took possession of that and the adjacent islands in the name of his sovereigns. There was no vestige of a human being to be seen, the island appeared to be uninhabited; a rich and dense forest overspread it, some of the trees being in blossom, others laden with unknown fruits, others possessing spicy odours—among which was one with the leaf of the laurel and the fragrance of the clove.

From hence they made sail for an island of larger size, with a remarkable mountain, one peak of which rose to a great height with streams of water gushing from it, which proved afterwards to be the crater of a volcano. As they approached within three leagues, they beheld a great torrent tumbling over a precipice of such immense height, that, to use the words of the narrator, it seemed to be falling from the sky. As it broke into foam in its descent, many at first believed it to be merely a stratum of white rock ‡. To this island, which was called by the Indians Turuqueira †, the admiral gave the name of Guadaloupe, having promised the monks of our Lady of Guadaloupe

* Letter of Dr. Chanca.

† Letter of Dr. Chanca. Peter Martyr calls it Carncueira, or Queraquiera. Decad. 1, lib. ii.

in Estremadura to call some newly-discovered place after their convent.

Landing here on the 4th, they visited a village near the shore, the inhabitants of which fled at the sight of them, some leaving even their children behind in their terror and confusion. These, the Spaniards soothed with caresses, binding hawks'-bells and other trinkets round their arms, to win the goodwill of their parents. This village, like most of those of the island, consisted of twenty or thirty houses, built round a kind of public place or square. The houses were constructed in a similar style to those of Cuba and Hispaniola, of trunks of trees interwoven with reeds and branches, and thatched with palm leaves. They were square, not circular like those of the other islands *, and each had its portico or shelter from the sun. The entrance of one of these houses was decorated with images of serpents tolerably carved in wood. Their furniture was the same; —hammocks of cotton net, utensils formed of calabashes or earthenware, equal to the best of those of Hispaniola. There were large quanti-

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 62.

ties of cotton—some crude, some in yarn, and some wrought into cloth of very tolerable texture; and many bows and arrows, the latter tipped with sharp bones. Provisions seemed to abound here. There were many domesticated geese like those of Europe, and parrots as large as household fowls, with blue, green, white, and scarlet plumage, being the splendid species called guacamayos. Here also the Spaniards first met with the delicious anana, or pine apple, the flavour and fragrance of which astonished and delighted them. While searching these houses, they were surprised to find a pan or other utensil of iron, not having ever met with that metal in the New World. Fernando Colon supposes, however, that it was formed of a certain kind of heavy stone found among those islands, which, when burnt, has the appearance of shining iron, and in their hasty survey may have been mistaken for such; though he admits that it might have been some utensil brought by the Indians from Hispaniola. Certain it is, that no native iron was ever found among the people of these islands.

Another object, which was a matter of surprise

and speculation, was the stern post of a vessel, which they found in one of the houses. How had it reached these shores, which appeared never to have been visited by the ships of civilized man? Was it the wreck of some vessel from the more enlightened countries of Asia, which they supposed to lie somewhere in this direction? Or was it part of the caravel which Columbus had lost at the island of Hispaniola during his first voyage? Or was it some fragment of a European ship which had drifted across the Atlantic? The latter was most probably the case. The constant current which sets over from the coast of Africa, produced by the steady prevalence of the trade winds, must occasionally bring the wrecks of the Old World to the shores of the New; and long before the discovery of Columbus, the simple savages of the islands and the coasts may have gazed with wonder at huge fragments of European barks, which have perished in the opposite regions of the ocean, and have gradually floated to their shores.

What most struck the attention of the Spaniards, and filled them with horror, was the sight of various human bones, vestiges, as they sup-

posed, of the unnatural repasts of these savages. There were also sculls suspended in the houses, which apparently were used as vases and other household utensils. These dismal objects convinced them that they were now at the abodes of the Cannibals, or Caribs—those roving and ferocious warriors, whose predatory expeditions and ruthless character rendered them the terror of these seas. The boat having returned on board, Columbus proceeded for upwards of two leagues, until late in the evening, when he anchored in a convenient port. The island on this side extended for the distance of five and twenty leagues, diversified with lofty mountains and broad plains. Along the coast were seen small villages and hamlets, the inhabitants of which fled in affright as they beheld the squadron sweeping along their shores. At day-break Columbus permitted several of the captains to land, with a number of their men, to endeavour to communicate with the inhabitants. These divided into parties, and returned in the course of the day, having taken a boy and several women, some of whom were natives of the island, and others captives. From the latter,

Columbus was confirmed in his idea that this was one of the islands of the Caribs. He learnt that the inhabitants were in league with two neighbouring islands, but that they made war upon all others in their vicinity. They even went on predatory enterprises, in their canoes made from the hollowed trunks of trees, to the distance of one hundred and fifty leagues. Their arms were bows and arrows pointed with the bones of fishes, or shells of tortoises, and poisoned with the juice of a certain herb. They made descents upon the islands, ravaged the villages, carried off the youngest and handsomest of the women, whom they retained as servants or companions, and made prisoners of the men, to be killed and eaten.

After hearing such formidable accounts of the natives of this island, Columbus was extremely uneasy at finding, in the evening, that a captain of one of the caravels, Diego Marque, was missing, together with eight men. He had landed with his party early in the morning without leave, and, straying into the woods, had not since been seen or heard of. On the following day the wanderers had not returned, and the anxiety of the

admiral increased, fearing that they might have fallen into some ambush of the savages, for several of them were such experienced mariners, that it was thought, in case of being lost, they could readily have found their way back by the stars. Parties were sent in various directions in quest of them, each with a trumpeter to sound calls and signals. Guns were fired from the ships, and arquebuses on shore, but all to no purpose, and the parties returned in the evening, wearied with a fruitless search. They had visited several hamlets, in which they met with what they considered proofs of the cannibal propensities of the natives, and which were by no means calculated to allay their apprehensions for the safety of their companions. Human limbs were suspended to the beams of the houses, as if curing for provisions; they found the head of a young man recently killed, which was yet bleeding, and some parts of his body boiling with the flesh of geese and parrots, and others roasting before the fire*.

Several of the natives, in the course of the day, had been seen occasionally on the shore, gazing

* P. Martyr, Letter 147, to Pomponio Seto. Idem. decad. 1, lib. ii.

with wonder at the ships, but when the boats approached the island, they fled to the woods or the mountains. Several women came off to the Spaniards for refuge, being captives who had been brought from other islands. Columbus ordered that they should be decorated with hawks'-bells, and strings of beads and bugles, and sent on shore, in hopes by these means to entice some of the men of the island to visit them. They soon returned to the boats stripped of their ornaments by the ferocious islanders, and imploring to be taken on board the ships. The admiral learnt from them that most of the men of the island were absent, the king having sailed some time before with ten canoes and three hundred warriors, on a predatory cruise in quest of prisoners and booty. When the men went forth on these expeditions, the women remained to defend their shores from invasion. They were expert archers, partaking of the warrior spirit of their husbands, and almost equalling them in force and intrepidity *.

Beside the female fugitives who had taken refuge

* P. Martyr, decad. 3, lib. ix.

on board of the ships, there were several boys who had been captives among the natives, and reserved, for a time, with a singular refinement of cruelty. The Spaniards were informed, that it was the custom of the Caribs to rear these youthful prisoners to man's estate, and then to fatten them for their feasts, and that they were deprived of their virility to render them more tender and palatable food *. There is something so revolting to human nature in the idea of cannibalism, that we would fain attribute these accounts to the mistakes, the misinterpretations, and the fables of travellers, but they are too positively affirmed by respectable writers, and are too curious in themselves to be passed over in silence.

Columbus was now at a loss what course to adopt. He was anxious to arrive at Hispaniola, and ascertain the fate of the followers whom he had left there, and was impatient of any delay. To sail without these men, however, provided they were yet alive, was to abandon them to a cruel death at the hands of cannibals. To leave

* Letter of Dr. Chanca. Peter Martyr, Let. 147. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 46.

a vessel and crew behind to await their return was to run the risk of losing them by a thousand accidents on these wild coasts and in these unexplored seas. In this emergency, Alonzo de Ojeda, the same daring young cavalier whose exploit on the tower of the cathedral at Seville has been mentioned, volunteered to penetrate with forty men into the interior of the island, and to search all the forests for the wanderers. His offer was accepted, and the admiral commanded, that, during his absence, the ships should take in a supply of wood and water, and gave permission for part of the crews to land, to wash their clothes and recreate themselves on shore.

Alonzo de Ojeda, with his followers, beat up all the forests in the neighbourhood, and marched far into the interior discharging arquebuses, sounding trumpets in the hollow valleys, and from the cliffs of mountains and precipices; but it was all in vain, no voice nor sound but their own echoes was heard in reply. Their search was rendered excessively toilsome by the closeness of the forests, which flourished with the vigorous and wild luxuriance of the tropics.

Ojeda saw every thing romantic with the eye of a young adventurer, and brought back the most exaggerated accounts of the natural productions of the country. The forests were filled with the odour of aromatic trees and shrubs, in which he fancied he perceived the fragrance of many precious gums and spices. He saw many tropical birds of unknown species; also falcons, royal herons, kites, wood-pigeons, turtle-doves, and crows. He fancied also that he met with partridges, which, in reality, were only to be found in the island of Cuba, and that he heard the song of the nightingale, which is unknown in the New World. The island, however, abounded with fruits, for, according to Peter Martyr, the cannibals being a wild and wandering people, and overrunning all the neighbouring countries in their expeditions, were accustomed to bring home the seeds and roots of all kinds of strange and profitable plants. As a proof of its luxuriance also, he observes that honey was found in hollow trees and in the cliffs of the rocks. So abundantly was it watered, that Ojeda declared he had waded through twenty-six rivers within the distance of six leagues,

though it is probable many of them were the windings and doublings of the same stream.

Columbus now gave the stragglers up for lost. Several days had elapsed since their disappearance, during which time, if alive, it seemed impossible that they should not have either been found, or have made their way back to the ships. He was on the point of sailing, when, to the universal joy of the fleet, a signal was made by them from the shore. When they came on board, their haggard and exhausted looks bespoke what they had suffered. Having unaccountably diverged on their first entering the forests, they had unknowingly penetrated deeper and deeper into the island, until they had become completely bewildered. For several days they had been perplexed in the mazes of a trackless forest, so dense as almost to exclude the light of day. They had clambered rocks, waded rivers, and struggled through briars and thickets. Some, who were experienced seamen, climbed the trees, in hopes of getting a sight of the stars, by which they might govern their course; but the wide-spreading branches and thick foliage shut out all view

of the heavens *. They were harassed with the most dismal apprehensions, fearing that the admiral, thinking them dead, might set sail and leave them behind in this wilderness, cut off for ever from their homes and the abodes of civilized man. At length, when almost reduced to despair, they had arrived at the sea-shore, and following its margin for some time, beheld, to their great joy, the fleet riding quietly at anchor. They brought with them several Indian women and boys; but in all their wanderings they had not met with any man; the greater part of the warriors, as has been said, being fortunately absent on an expedition.

Notwithstanding the hardships they had endured, and his joy at their return, Columbus thought it important in a service of so critical a nature to punish every breach of discipline. The captain was, therefore, put under arrest, and a part of the rations of the men were stopped for having thus strayed away without permission †.

* Dr. Chanca's letter. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 46.

† Dr. Chanca's Letter.

CHAPTER III.

CRUISE AMONG THE CARIBBEE ISLANDS.

[1493.]

WEIGHING anchor on the 10th of November, Columbus steered along the coast of Guadaloupe towards the north-west, in which direction, according to his own calculations, and the informations of the Indians, lay Hispaniola. The women whom he had recently taken on board, had given him intelligence of other islands to the south, and had assured him that the main land extended in that quarter; information which he afterwards found to be true, but at present his impatience to arrive at the harbour of Nativity, prevented his extending his discoveries.

Continuing along this beautiful archipelago, he gave names to its islands as they successively rose to view. Montserrat, Santa Maria la Redonda, Santa Maria la Antigua, and San Martin; various other islands appeared to the north, and extending north-west and south-east, all very lofty and moun-

tainous, with stately and magnificent forests, but the admiral forbore to visit them. The weather proving boisterous, they anchored on the 14th November, at an island called Ayay by the Indians, but to which the admiral gave the name of Santa Cruz. Here the boat was sent on shore, with five-and-twenty men, to get water and procure information concerning their route. They found a village deserted by the men, but they secured a few women and boys, most of whom were captives, brought hither from other islands; for this was likewise an abode of the Caribs. They had soon an instance of the courage and ferocity of this singular race. While the boat was on shore, a canoe with a few Indians, two of whom were females, came coasting from a distant part of the island, and, turning a point of land, arrived suddenly in full view of the ships. Astonished at what to them must have been so awful and supernatural an apparition, they remained for a long time gazing in mute amazement. So completely were they entranced in contemplation, that the boat returning from the shore, had stolen close upon them before they perceived it. Seizing

their paddles, they now attempted to escape; but though their light canoe skimmed the surface of the waves, the steady sweep of the oar gained upon them, and the boat being between them and the land, cut off their retreat. Seeing flight was vain, they caught up their bows and arrows, and turned fiercely upon their pursuers. The women fought as well as the men. One of them appeared to be treated with obedience and reverence, as if she were their queen. She was accompanied by her son, a young man (says Peter Martyr,) strongly made, with a terrible and frowning brow, and a lion's face *. They plied their bows with amazing vigour and rapidity. Although the Spaniards were covered with their bucklers, two of them were quickly wounded; and an arrow was sent with such force by one of the heroines, as to pass through and through a buckler.

To avoid this galling shower, which was rendered more formidable from an apprehension that the arrows might be poisoned, the Spaniards ran their boat violently upon the canoe, and over-

* Peter Martyr, decad. 1, lib. ii.

turned it. The fierce savages, however, continued to fight while in the water; gathering themselves occasionally upon sunken rocks, and discharging their arrows as dexterously as though they had been upon firm land. It was with the utmost difficulty they could be overcome and taken. One of them was transfixed with a lance, so that he died after being brought to the ships, and the queen's son was wounded. When on board, the Spaniards could not but wonder at their untamed spirit and fierce demeanour. Their hair was long and coarse, their eyes encircled with paint, so as to give them a hideous expression; and they had bands of cotton bound firmly above and below the muscular parts of the arms and legs, so as to cause them to swell to a disproportioned size, which was regarded by them as a great beauty, a custom which prevailed among various tribes of the New World. Though captives in chains, and in the power of their enemies, they still retained a frowning brow and an air of defiance. Peter Martyr, who often went to see them when in Spain, declares, from his own experience, and that of others who accompanied

him, that it was impossible to look at them without a certain inward sensation of horror; nature having endowed them with so menacing and terrible an aspect. This sensation was doubtless caused in a great measure from the idea of their being cannibals. In this skirmish, according to the same writer, the Indians used poisoned arrows; and one of the Spaniards died within a few days, of a wound he had received from a female warrior*.

Pursuing his voyage, Columbus soon came in sight of a great cluster of islands of various shapes and appearances. Some were verdant and covered with forests, but the greater part naked and steril, rising into wild and craggy mountains; many of the rocks of which were of a bright azure colour, and others of a glistering white; these, Columbus, with his usual vivacity of imagination, supposed to contain mines of rich metals and precious stones. The islands lying close together, with the sea beating and tossing roughly in the narrow channels which divided

P. Martyr, decad. 1, lib. ii. Hist. del. Almirante, c. 47. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., c. 85, MS. Lett. of Dr. Chanca.

them, rendered it dangerous to enter among them with the large ships. Keeping off, therefore, in the broad sea, Columbus sent in a small caravel with latine sails, to reconnoitre, which returned with the report that there were upwards of fifty islands, but apparently uninhabited. To the largest of this group Columbus gave the name of Santa Ursula, and he called the others the Eleven Thousand Virgins*.

Deferring the examination of them to some future time, he continued his course, until he arrived one evening in sight of a great island covered with beautiful forests, and indented with fine havens. It was called by the natives Boriquon, but he gave it the name of San Juan Bautista, and it is the same since known by the name of Porto Rico. This was the native island of most of the captives who had fled to the ships for refuge from the Caribs. According to their accounts, it was fertile and populous, and under the dominion of a single cacique. Its inhabitants were not given to rove, and possessed but few canoes. They were subject to frequent invasions

* P. Martyr, decad. 1, lib. ii. Letter of Dr. Chanca.

from the Caribs, who were their implacable enemies. They had become warriors, therefore, in their own defence, using the bow and arrow and the war club; and in their contests with their cannibal foes, they retorted upon them their own atrocities, devouring their prisoners in revenge.

After running for a whole day along the beautiful coast of this island, they anchored in a bay at the west end, which abounded with fish. On landing, they found an Indian village, constructed as usual round a common square, like a market-place, with one large and well-built house. From hence, a spacious road led to the sea-side, having fences on each side, of interwoven reeds, enclosing fruitful gardens. At the end of the road was a kind of terrace, or look-out, overhanging the water. The whole place had an air of neatness and ingenuity, superior to the ordinary residences of the natives, and appeared to be the abode of some important chieftain. All, however, was silent and deserted. Not a human being was to be seen, during the time that they remained at the place. The natives had fled and concealed themselves at the sight of the squadron. After re-

maining here for two days, they again made sail, and stood for the island of Hispaniola. Thus ended his cruise among the Caribbee islands, the account of whose fierce and savage people was received with eager curiosity by the learned of Europe, and considered as settling one dark and doubtful question to the disadvantage of human nature. Peter Martyr, in his letter to Pomponius Lætus, announces the fact with fearful solemnity. "The stories of the Lestrigonians and of Polyphemus who fed on human flesh, are no longer doubtful! Attend, but beware, lest thy hair bristle with horror!"

That many of the pictures given us of this extraordinary race of people have been coloured by the fears of the Indians, and the prejudices of the Spaniards, is highly probable. They were constantly the terror of the former, and the brave and obstinate opponents of the latter. The evidences adduced of their cannibal propensities must be considered with large allowances for the careless and inaccurate observations of seafaring men, and the preconceived belief of the fact, which existed in the minds of the Spaniards. It was a custom

among the natives of many of the islands, and of other parts of the New World, to preserve the remains of their deceased relatives and friends. Sometimes the entire body; sometimes only the head, or some of the limbs, dried at the fire; sometimes the mere bones. These, when found in the dwellings of the natives of Hispaniola, against whom no prejudice of the kind existed, were correctly regarded as relics of the deceased, preserved through affection or reverence; but any remains of the kind found among the Caribs, were looked upon with horror as proofs of cannibalism.

The warlike and unyielding character of these people, so different from that of the pusillanimous nations around them, and the wide scope of their enterprises and wanderings, like those of the Nomade tribes of the Old World, entitle them to distinguished attention. They were trained to war from their infancy. As soon as they could walk, their intrepid mothers put in their hands the bow and arrow, and prepared them to take an early part in the hardy enterprises of their fathers. Their distant roamings by sea made

them observant and intelligent. The natives of the other islands only knew how to divide time by day and night, by the sun and moon; whereas these had acquired some knowledge of the stars, by which to calculate the times and seasons*.

The traditional accounts of their origin, though of course extremely vague, are yet capable of being verified to a great degree by geographical facts, and open one of the rich veins of curious inquiry and speculation which abound in the New World. They are said to have migrated from the remote valleys embosomed in the Apalachian mountains. The earliest accounts we have of them represent them with their weapons in their hands, continually engaged in wars, winning their way and shifting their abode, until, in the course of time, they found themselves at the extremity of Florida. Here, abandoning the northern continent, they passed over to the Lucayos, and from thence gradually, in the process of years, from island to island of that vast and verdant chain, which links, as it were,

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 62.

the end of Florida to the coast of Paria, on the southern continent. The Archipelago, extending from Porto Rico to Tobago, was their strong hold, and the island of Guadaloupe in a manner their citadel. Hence, they made their expeditions, and spread the terror of their name through all the surrounding countries. Swarms of them landed upon the southern continent, and overran some parts of terra firma. Traces of them have been discovered far in the interior of the country through which flows the Oroonoko. The Dutch found colonies of them on the banks of the Ikouteka, which empties into the Surinam, along the Esquibi, the Maroni, and other rivers of Guayana, and in the country watered by the windings of the Cayenne; and it would appear that they have extended their wanderings to the shores of the southern ocean, where, among the aboriginals of Brazil, were some who called themselves Caribs, distinguished from the surrounding Indians by their superior hardihood, subtlety, and enterprise*.

To trace the footsteps of this roving tribe

* Rochefort, Hist. Nat. des Iles Antilles, Rotterdam, 1465.

throughout its wide migrations from the Apalachian mountains of the northern continent, along the clusters of islands which stud the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean sea to the shores of Paria, and so across the vast regions of Guayana and Amazonia to the remote coast of Brazil, would be one of the most curious researches in aboriginal history, and might throw much light upon the mysterious question of the population of the New World.

CHAPTER IV.

ARRIVAL AT THE HARBOUR OF LA NAVIDAD. – DISASTER OF THE FORTRESS.

[1493.]

On the 22d of November, the fleet arrived off the end of a great island, and it was soon ascertained to be the eastern extremity of Hayti, or, as the admiral had named it, Hispaniola. The greatest excitation prevailed throughout the armada, at the thoughts of soon arriving at the end of their voyage. Columbus anticipated the joy of the handful of bold spirits which he had left in the wilderness, and looked for inestimable information from them, relative to the island and its surrounding seas; if not for heaps of amassed treasure. Those of his followers who had been here in the preceding voyage, remembered the pleasant days they had passed among the blooming groves of Hayti; and the rest looked forward with eagerness to scenes and manners which had been painted to them with all the captivating illusions of the golden age.

As the fleet swept gently, with easy sail, along the green shore, a boat was sent to land to bury a Biscayan sailor, who had died of the wound of an arrow which he had received in the skirmish with the Caribs. Two light caravels hovered near the shore to guard the boat's crew, while the funeral ceremony was performed on the beach, under the trees. Several of the natives came off to the ship, with a message to the admiral from the cacique of the neighbourhood, inviting him to land, and promising great quantities of gold; anxious, however, to arrive at La Navidad, Columbus declined the invitation, dismissed them with presents, and continued his course. After sailing for a considerable distance, he came to the gulf of Las Flechas, or, as it is now called, the gulf of Samana, the same place where, in his preceding voyage, had occurred the skirmish with the natives. Here he set on shore one of the young Indians of the place, who had accompanied him to Spain, and had been converted to Christianity. He dismissed him finely apparelled and loaded with trinkets, anticipating favourable effects from his representing to his countrymen all

the wonders that he had seen, and the kind treatment he had experienced. The young Indian made many promises of friendly exertions, but he either forgot them all, on regaining his wild liberty and his native mountains, or he fell a victim to the envy caused by his wealth and finery. Nothing was seen or heard of him more *. Only one Indian of those who had been to Spain now remained in the fleet; a young Lucayan native of the island of Guanahani, who had been baptized at Barcelona, and had been named after the admiral's brother, Diego Colon. He continued always faithful and devoted to the Spaniards.

On the 25th, Columbus anchored in the harbour of Monte Christi; anxious to fix upon a place suitable for a settlement in the neighbourhood of the stream, to which, in his first voyage, he had given the name of the Rio del Oro, or the Golden River. As several of the mariners were ranging the coast, they found, on the green and moist banks of a rivulet, the bodies of a man and boy; the former, with a cord of Spanish

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, lib. ii., c. 9.

grass about his neck, and his arms extended and tied by the wrists to a stake in the form of a cross. The bodies were in such a state of decay, that it was impossible to ascertain whether they were Indians or Europeans. Sinister doubts, however, were entertained, which were confirmed on the following day; for on revisiting the shore, they found, at some distance from the former, two other bodies, one of which, having a beard, was evidently the corpse of a white man.

The pleasant anticipations of Columbus on his approach to La Navidad were now overcast with gloomy forebodings. The experience he had recently had of the ferocity of some of the inhabitants of these islands, made him doubtful of the amity of others, and he began to fear that some misfortune might have befallen Arana and his garrison.

The frank and fearless manner, however, in which a number of the natives came off to the ships, and their unembarrassed demeanour, in some measure allayed his suspicions. Had any violence been done to the white men, they would not have ventured thus confidently among their companions.

On the 27th, he arrived in the evening opposite to the harbour of La Navidad, and cast anchor about a league from the land, not daring to enter in the dark, on account of the dangerous reefs. It was too late in the night to distinguish objects. Impatient to satisfy his doubts therefore, he ordered two cannon to be fired. The report echoed along the shore, but there was no reply from the fort. Every eye was now directed to catch the gleam of some signal light; every ear listened to hear some friendly shout: but there was neither light nor shout, nor any other sign of life: all was darkness and death-like silence*.

Several hours passed away in the most dismal suspense. A thousand disastrous pictures presented themselves of the fate of their companions, and every one longed for the morning light, to put an end to his uncertainty. About midnight a canoe was observed approaching the fleet; when within a certain distance, it paused, and the Indians who were in it, hailing one of the vessels, asked for the admiral. When directed to his ship they drew near to it, but would not venture

* Letter of Dr. Chanca. Navarrete, Collec. de Viage, t. i.

on board until they saw Columbus personally. He showed himself at the side of his vessel, and a light being held up, his countenance and commanding person were not to be mistaken. They now entered the ship without hesitation. One of them was a cousin of the Cacique Guacanagari, and brought a present from him of two masks ornamented with gold. Columbus immediately inquired about the Spaniards who had remained on the island. The information which the native gave was somewhat confused, or perhaps was imperfectly understood, as the only Indian interpreter on board was the young Lucayan, Diego Colon, whose native language was different from that of Hayti. He told Columbus that several of the Spaniards had died of sickness; others had fallen in a quarrel, which had occurred among themselves, and others had removed to a different part of the island, where they had taken to themselves several Indian wives. That Guacanagari had been assailed by Caonabo, the fierce cacique of the golden mountains of Cibao, who had wounded him in battle, and had burnt his village; and that he remained ill of his wound in a neighbour-

ing hamlet, which had prevented his hastening in person to welcome the admiral on his return *.

Melancholy as were these tidings, they relieved Columbus from a dark and dismal surmise. Whatever disasters had overwhelmed his garrison, it had not fallen a sacrifice to the perfidy of the natives: his good opinion of the gentleness and kindness of these people had not been misplaced; nor had their cacique forfeited the admiration inspired by his benevolent hospitality. Thus, the most corroding care was dismissed from his mind; for, to a generous spirit, there is nothing so disheartening as to discover treachery where it has reposed its confidence and friendship. It would seem also that some of the garrison were yet alive, though scattered about the island; they would doubtless soon hear of the arrival of the ships, and would hasten to rejoin them, well qualified to give information of the interior.

Satisfied of the friendly disposition of the natives, the cheerfulness of the crews was in a

* Dr. Chanca's Letter, Hist. del Almirante, c. 48. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, lib. i., c. 9.

great measure restored. The Indians who had come on board were well entertained, and departed in the night gratified with various presents, promising to return in the morning with the Cacique Guacanagari. The mariners now awaited the dawn of day with reassured spirits, when it was expected that the cordial intercourse and pleasant scenes of the first voyage would be renewed.

The morning dawned and passed away, and the day advanced and began to decline, without the promised visit from the Cacique. Some apprehensions were now entertained that the Indians who had visited them the preceding night might be drowned, as they had partaken freely of wine, and their small canoe was easy to be overset. There was a silence and an air of desertion about the whole neighbourhood extremely suspicious. On their preceding visit the harbour had been a scene of continual animation; canoes gliding over the clear waters, Indians in groups on the shores, or under the trees, or swimming off to the caravel. Now, not a canoe was to be seen, not an Indian hailed them from the land; nor was there any smoke rising from among the groves, to

give a sign of habitation. After waiting for a long time in vain, Columbus sent a boat to the shore to reconnoitre. On landing, the crew hastened to the place where the fortress had been erected. They found it a burnt ruin; the palisadoes beaten down, and the whole presenting the appearance of having been sacked and destroyed. Here and there were broken chests, spoiled provisions, and the ragged remains of European garments; which gave dismal indications of the fate of their companions. Not an Indian approached them. They caught sight of two or three lurking at a distance among the trees, and apparently watching them; but they vanished into the woods on finding themselves observed. Meeting no one from whom they could obtain an explanation of the melancholy scene before them, they returned with dejected hearts to the ships, and related to the admiral what they had seen.

Columbus was greatly troubled in mind at this intelligence, and the fleet having now anchored in the harbour, he went himself to shore on the following morning. Repairing to the ruins of the fortress, he found every thing as had been

described, and searched in vain for the remains of dead bodies. No traces of the garrison were to be seen, but the broken utensils, and torn vestments, scattered here and there among the grass. There were many surmises and conjectures. If the fortress had been sacked, some of the garrison might yet survive, and might either have fled from the neighbourhood, or been carried into captivity. Cannon and arquebuses were discharged, in hopes that if any of the survivors were hid among rocks and thickets in the vicinity, they might hear them and come forth; but no one made his appearance. A mournful and lifeless silence reigned over the place. The suspicion of treachery on the part of Guacanagari was again revived, but Columbus was unwilling to indulge it. On looking further, the village of that cacique was found a mere heap of burnt ruins, which shewed that he had been involved in the same disaster with the garrison.

Columbus had left orders with Arana and the other officers to bury all the treasure they might procure, or, in case of sudden danger, to throw it into the well of the fortress. He ordered excava-

tions to be made, therefore, among the ruins, and the well to be cleared out. While this search was making, he proceeded with the boats to explore the neighbourhood, partly in hopes of gaining intelligence of any scattered survivors of the garrison, and partly to look out for a better situation for a fortress. After proceeding about a league he came to a hamlet, the inhabitants of which had fled, taking with them whatever they could, and hiding the rest in the grass. In the houses were found European articles, which evidently had not been procured by barter, such as stockings, pieces of cloth, an anchor of the caravel which had been wrecked, and a beautiful Moorish robe, which remained folded in the form in which it had been brought from Spain *.

Having passed some time in contemplating these scattered documents of a disastrous story, Columbus returned to the ruins of the fortress. The excavations and search in the well had proved fruitless, no treasure was to be found. Not far from the fort, however, they had discovered the

* Letter of Dr. Chanca; Cura de los Palacios, c. 120.

bodies of eleven men, buried in different places, and which were known, by their clothing, to be Europeans. They had evidently been for some time in the ground, the grass having grown upon their graves. In the course of the day a number of the Indians began to make their appearance, hovering timidly at a distance, and shewing great distrust. Their apprehensions were gradually conquered by amicable signs and trifling presents, until they became perfectly communicative. Some of them could speak a few words of Spanish, and knew the names of all the men who had remained with Arana. By this means, and by the aid of the interpreter, the story of the garrison was in some measure ascertained.

It is curious to note this first foot-print of civilization in the New World. Those whom Columbus had left behind, says Oviedo, with the exception of the commander Don Diego Arana, and one or two others, were but little calculated to follow the precepts of so prudent a person, or to discharge the critical duties enjoined upon them. They were principally men of the lowest order,

or mariners who knew not how to conduct themselves with restraint or sobriety on shore *. No sooner had the departing sail of the admiral faded from their sight, than all his counsels and commands died away from their minds. Though a mere handful of men, surrounded by savage tribes, and dependent upon their own prudence and good conduct, and upon the good-will of the natives, for very existence, yet they soon began to indulge in the most wanton cruelties and abuses. Some were incited by rapacious avarice, others by gross sensuality. They sought to amass private hoards of gold, nor were they content with their success among the Indian women, though at least two or three wives had been granted to each of them by Guacanagari. They possessed themselves, by all kinds of wrongful means, of the ornaments and other property of the natives, and seduced from them their wives and daughters. Fierce brawls incessantly occurred among themselves, about their ill-gotten spoils, or the favours of the Indian beauties; and the simple natives beheld with astonishment the beings whom they had worshipped

* Oviedo, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 12.

as descended from the skies, abandoned to the grossest of earthly passions, and raging against each other with worse than brutal ferocity.

Still these dissensions were not dangerous, as long as they observed one of the grand injunctions of Columbus, and kept together in the fortress, maintaining military vigilance; but all precaution of the kind was soon forgotten. In vain did Don Diego de Arana interpose his authority; in vain did every inducement present itself which could bind man and man together in a foreign land. All order, all subordination, all unanimity was at an end. Many of them abandoned the fortress, and lived carelessly and at random about the neighbourhood; every one was for himself, or associated with some little knot of confederates to injure and despoil the rest. Thus factions broke out among them, until ambition arose to complete the destruction of their mimic empire. The two persons, Pedro Gutierrez and Rodrigo de Escobido, whom Columbus had left as lieutenants to the commander, to succeed to him in case of accident, now took advantage of these disorders, and aspired to an equal share in the authority, if

not to the supreme control*. Violent affrays succeeded, in which a Spaniard named Jacomo was killed. Having failed in their object, Gutierrez and Escobido withdrew from the fortress with nine of their adherents, and a number of their women; and, still bent on command, now turned their thoughts on distant enterprise. Having heard marvellous accounts of the mines of Cibao, and the golden sands of its mountain rivers, they set off for that district, flushed with the thoughts of amassing immense treasure. Thus they disregarded another strong injunction of Columbus, which was to keep within the friendly territories of Guacanagari. The region to which they repaired was in the interior of the island, within the province of Magnana, ruled by the famous Caonabo,. called by the Spaniards the Lord of the Golden House. This renowned chieftain was a Carib by birth, possessing the fierceness and the enterprise of his nation. He had come an adventurer to the island, and had acquired such ascendency over these simple and unwarlike people by his courage and address,

* Oviedo, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 12.

that he had made himself the most potent of their caciques. His warlike exploits were renowned throughout the island, and the inhabitants universally stood in awe of him for his Carib origin.

Caonabo had for some time maintained permanent importance in the island, the hero of this savage world, when the ships of the white men suddenly appeared upon the shores. The wonderful accounts of their power and prowess had reached him among his mountains, and he had the shrewdness to perceive that his own consequence must decline before such formidable intruders. The departure of Columbus had revived his hopes that their intrusion would be but temporary. The discords and excesses of those who remained, while they moved his detestation, inspired him with increasing confidence. No sooner, therefore, did Gutierrez and Escobido, with their companions, take refuge in his dominions, than he considered himself sure of a triumph over these detested strangers. He seized upon the fugitives and put them instantly to death. He then assembled his subjects privately, and, concerting his plans with the cacique of Marion,

whose territories adjoined those of Guacanagari on the west, he determined to make a sudden attack upon the fortress. Emerging from among the mountains, and traversing great tracts of forest with profound secrecy, he arrived with his army, in the vicinity of the village, without being discovered. Confiding in the gentle and pacific nature of the Indians, the Spaniards had neglected all military precautions, and lived in the most careless security. But ten men remained in the fortress with Arana, and these do not appear to have maintained any guard. The rest were quartered in houses in the neighbourhood. In the dead of the night, when all were wrapped in unsuspecting repose, Caonabo and his warriors burst upon the place with frightful yells, got possession of the fortress before the inmates could put themselves upon their defence, and surrounded and set fire to the houses in which the rest of the white men were sleeping. The Spaniards were completely taken by surprise. Eight of them fled to the sea-side pursued by the savages, and, rushing into the waves for safety, were drowned; the rest were massacred. Guacanagari and his

subjects fought faithfully in defence of their guests, but not being of a warlike character, they were easily routed; Guacanagari was wounded in the combat by the hand of Caonabo, and his village was burnt to the ground *.

Such was the history of the first European establishment in the New World. It presents in a diminutive compass an epitome of the gross vices which degrade civilization, and the grand political errors which sometimes subvert the mightiest empires. All law and order relaxed by corruption and licentiousness, public good was sacrificed to private interest and passion, the community was convulsed by divers factions and dissensions, until the whole was shaken asunder by two aspiring demagogues, ambitious of the command of a petty fortress in a wilderness, and the supreme control of eight-and-thirty men.

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, lib. ii., cap. 9. Letter of Dr. Chanca. Peter Martyr, decad. 1, lib. ii. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 49. Cura de los Palacios, c. 120. MS. Muños, Hist. N. Mundo, l. iv.

CHAPTER V.

TRANSACTIONS WITH THE NATIVES. SUSPICIOUS CONDUCT OF GUACANAGARI.

[1493.]

The tragical story of the fortress, as gathered from the Indians at the harbour, received confirmation from another quarter. One of the captains, Melchor Maldonado, was despatched along the coast with his caravel to the east, to look out for some more favourable situation for a settlement. He had scarcely proceeded three leagues, when a canoe came off from the shore, in which were two Indians. One of them, the brother of Guacanagari, entreated him, in the name of the cacique, to come tó land and visit him at the village where he lay ill. Maldonado immediately went to shore with two or three of his companions. They found Guacanagari confined by lameness to his hammock, surrounded by seven of his wives. The cacique expressed great regret at not being able to visit the admiral, whom he was extremely desirous to see. He related

various particulars concerning the disasters of the garrison, and the part which he and his subjects had taken in its defence, showing his leg bound up from a wound he had received. His story agreed with that already related. After treating the Spaniards with his accustomed respect and hospitality, he gave each of them at parting a present of some golden ornament.

On the following morning Columbus repaired in person to visit the cacique. To impress him with a superior idea of his present power and importance, he appeared with a numerous train of his principal officers, all richly dressed or in glittering armour. They found Guacanagari reclining in a hammock of cotton net. He exhibited great emotion on beholding the admiral, and immediately adverted to the death of the Spaniards. As he related the disasters of the garrison he shed many tears, but dwelt particularly on the part he had taken in the defence of his guests, pointing out several of his subjects present who had received wounds in the battle. On regarding their scars, it was evident that the wounds had been received from Indian weapons.

Columbus was readily satisfied of the good faith of Guacanagari. When he reflected on the many proofs of an open and generous nature, which he had given at the time of his shipwreck, he could not believe him capable of so dark an act of perfidy. An exchange of presents now took place. The cacique gave him eight hundred beads of a certain stone called ciba, which they considered highly precious, and one hundred of gold, a golden coronet, and three small calabashes filled with gold dust, and thought himself outdone in munificence when presented with a number of glass beads, hawks'-bells, knives, pins, needles, small mirrors, and ornaments of copper, which metal he seemed to prefer to gold*.

The wound from which Guacanagari suffered was in the leg, which had been violently bruised by a stone. At the request of Columbus he permitted it to be examined by a surgeon who was present. On removing the bandage no signs of a wound were to be seen, although he shrunk with pain whenever the limb was han-

* Letter of De Chanca, Navarrete Collec. t. i.

dled *. As some time had elapsed since the battle, the external bruise might have disappeared, while a tenderness remained in the part. Several present, however, who had not been in the first voyage, and had witnessed nothing of the generous conduct of the cacique, looked upon his lameness as feigned, and the whole story of the battle a fabrication, to conceal his real perfidy. Father Boyle especially, who was a friar of vindictive spirit, advised the admiral to make an immediate example of the chieftain. Columbus, however, viewed the matter in a different light. Whatever prepossessions he might have were in favour of the cacique, his heart refused to believe in his criminality. Though conscious of innocence, Guacanagari might have feared the suspicions of the white men, and have exaggerated the effects of his wound; but the wounds of his subjects made by Indian weapons, and the destruction of his village, were strong proofs to Columbus of the truth of his story. To satisfy his more suspicious followers, and to pacify the friar, without gratifying his love for persecution,

* Jaem. Cura de los Palacios, cap. 120.

he observed that true policy dictated amiable conduct towards Guacanagari, at least until his guilt was fully ascertained. They had too great a force at present to apprehend anything from his hostility, but violent measures in this early stage of their intercourse with the natives might spread a general panic, and impede all their operations in the island. Most of his officers concurred in this opinion; so it was determined, notwithstanding the inquisitorial suggestions of the friar, to take the story of the Indians for current truth, and to continue to treat them with friendship.

At the invitation of Columbus, the cacique, though still apparently in pain from his wound*, accompanied him to the ships that very evening. He had wondered at the power and grandeur of the white men when they first visited his shores with two small caravels; but his wonder was infinitely increased on beholding a fleet riding at anchor in the harbour, and on going on board of the admiral's ship, which was a vessel of heavy burden. Here he beheld a number of Caribs

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 89.

who had been taken prisoners in the course of the voyage. So great was the dread of the timid inhabitants of Hayti for these fierce barbarians, that they contemplated them with fear and shuddering, even though in chains, and turned with averted countenances from their frowning aspects *. That the admiral had dared to invade these terrible beings in their very island, and had dragged them as it were from their strong holds, was, perhaps, one of the greatest proofs of the irresistible prowess of the white men.

Columbus took the cacique through the ship, and on every side he beheld new wonders. The various works of art, and the unknown productions of nature; the plants and fruits of the Old World; domestic fowls of different kinds, cattle, sheep, swine, and other animals, brought to stock the island, all struck him with astonishment; but what most filled him with amazement, was the sight of the horses. He had never seen any but the most diminutive quadrupeds, and was struck with admiration at the grandeur of these

* Peter Martyr, letter 153 to Pomponius Lætus.

noble animals, their great strength, terrific appearance, yet perfect docility *. He looked upon all these extraordinary objects as so many wonders brought from heaven, which he still believed to be the native home of the white men.

On board of the ship were ten of the women delivered from captivity among the Caribs. They were chiefly natives of the Island of Boriquen, or Porto Rico. These soon attracted the notice of the cacique, who is represented to have been of an amorous complexion. He entered into conversation with them; for though the islanders spoke different languages, or, rather, as is more probable, different dialects of the same language, they were able, in general, to understand each other. Among these women was one distinguished above her companions by a certain loftiness of air and manner; she had been much noticed and admired by the Spaniards, who had given her the name of Catalina. The cacique spoke to her repeatedly with great gentleness of tone and manner, pity in all probability being mingled with his admiration; for though rescued

* Hist. del Almirante, ubi seq. Letter of De Chanca.

from the hands of the Caribs, she and her companions were in a manner captives on board of the ship.

A collation was now spread before the chieftain, and Columbus endeavoured in every way to revive their former cordial intercourse. He treated his guest with every manifestation of perfect confidence, and talked of coming to live with him in his present residence, and of building houses in the vicinity. The cacique expressed much satisfaction at the idea, but observed that the situation of the place was unhealthy, which was indeed the case. Notwithstanding every demonstration of friendship, however, the cacique was evidently ill at ease. The charm of mutual confidence was broken. It was evident that the gross licentiousness of the garrison had greatly impaired the veneration of the Indians for their heaven-born visitors. Even the reverence for the symbols of the Christian faith, which Columbus endeavoured to inculcate as a grand means of civilization, was completely frustrated by the profligacy of its votaries. Though fond of ornaments, it was with the

greatest difficulty the cacique could be prevailed upon by the admiral to suspend an image of the Virgin about his neck, when he understood it to be an object of Christian adoration*.

The suspicions of the chieftain's guilt continued to gain ground with many of the Spaniards. Father Boyle, in particular, regarded him with hatred, and privately advised the admiral, now that he had him securely on board of his ship, to detain him prisoner; but Columbus rejected the council of the crafty friar, as contrary to sound policy and honourable faith. It is difficult, however, to conceal lurking ill-will; the heart will speak in the countenance, even though the tongue be mute. The cacique accustomed, in his former intercourse with the Spaniards, to meet on every side with faces beaming with gratitude and friendship, could not but perceive the altered looks of cold suspicion and secret hostility. Notwithstanding the frank and cordial hospitality of the admiral, therefore, he soon begged permission to return to land*.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 49.

† Peter Martyr, decad. 1, l. ii.

The next morning there was an appearance of mysterious movement and agitation among the natives on shore. Of this, the Spaniards could not comprehend the cause; as there was no longer that easy and unreserved communication between them which formerly prevailed. A messenger from the cacique inquired of the admiral how long he intended to remain at the harbour, and was informed that he should sail on the following day. In the evening the brother of Guacanagari came on board, under pretext of bartering a quantity of gold; he was observed to converse in private with the Indian women, and particularly with Catalina, the one whose distinguished appearance had attracted the attention of Guacanagari. After remaining some time on board, he returned to the shore. It would seem from subsequent events, that the warm heart of the cacique had been touched by the situation of this Indian beauty, and captivated by her charms; and that, with a kind of native gallantry, he had undertaken to deliver her from bondage.

At midnight, when the crew were buried in their first sleep, the intrepid Catalina awakened

her companions, and proposed a bold attempt to regain their liberty. The ship was anchored full three miles from the shore, and the sea was rough; but these island women were accustomed to buffet with the waves, and to consider the water almost as their natural element. Letting themselves down from the side of the vessel, with great caution and silence, they trusted to the strength of their arms, and swam bravely for the shore. With all their precautions they were overheard by the watch. The alarm was given, the boats were manned, and gave chase in the direction of a light blazing on the shore, an evident beacon for the fugitives. Notwithstanding all the exertions of the oar, such was the vigour of these sea-nymphs, that they reached the land in safety. Four were retaken on the beach, but the heroic Catalina with the rest of her companions made good their escape into the forest.

When the day dawned, Columbus sent to Guacanagari to demand the fugitives; or if they were not in his possession, that he would have search made for them. The residence of the cacique, however, was silent and deserted; not

an Indian was to be seen. Either conscious of the suspicions of the Spaniards, and apprehensive of their hostility, or desirous to enjoy his prize unmolested, the cacique had removed with all his effects, his household, and his followers, and had taken refuge with his island beauty in the interior. This sudden and mysterious desertion gave redoubled force to the doubts heretofore entertained, and Guacanagari was generally stigmatized as a traitor to the white men, and the perfidious destroyer of the garrison*.

* Peter Martyr, decad. 1, lib. ii. Letter of Dr. Chanca. Cura de los Palacios, cap. 120, MS.

CHAPTER VI.

FOUNDING OF THE CITY OF ISABELLA. MALADIES OF THE SPANIARDS.

[1493.]

THE misfortunes which had befallen the Spaniards both by sea and land, in the vicinity of this harbour, had thrown a gloom round the neighbourhood. The ruins of the fortress, and the graves of their murdered countrymen were continually before their eyes, and the forests no longer looked beautiful while there was an idea that treachery might be lurking in their shades. The silence and dreariness, also, caused by the desertion of the natives, gave a sinister appearance to the place. It began to be considered by the credulous mariners, as under some baneful influence or malignant star. These were sufficient objections to discourage the founding of a settlement in that superstitious age, but there were others of a more solid nature. The land in the vicinity was low, moist, and unhealthy, and there was no stone for

building; Columbus determined, therefore, to abandon the place altogether, and found his projected colony in some more favourable situation. No time was to be lost: the animals on board of the ships were suffering from long confinement, and needed the reviving range and the fresh herbage of the pasture; and the multitude of persons, unaccustomed to the sea, and pent up in the fleet, languished for the refreshment of the land. Reconnoitring expeditions were despatched, therefore, in the lighter caravels, which scoured the coast in each direction, entering the rivers and harbours, in search of an advantageous site for a colony. They were instructed also to make inquiries after Guacanagari, of whom Columbus, notwithstanding every suspicious appearance, still retained a favourable opinion. The expeditions returned after ranging a considerable extent of coast without success. There were fine rivers and secure ports, but the coast was low and marshy, and deficient in stone. The country was generally deserted, or if they saw any of the natives they fled immediately to the woods. Melchor Maldonado had proceeded to the eastward, until

he came to the dominions of another cacique who at first issued forth at the head of his warriors, with menacing aspect and a show of hostility; but was readily soothed into the most amicable disposition. From him he learnt that Guacanagari had retired from the plain to the mountains. Another party discovered an Indian concealed near a hamlet, having been disabled by a wound received from a lance when fighting against Caonabo. His account of the destruction of the fortress agreed with that of the Indians at the harbour, and concurred to vindicate the cacique from the charge of treachery. Thus the minds of the Spaniards continued full of doubt and perplexity as to the real perpetrators of this dark and dismal tragedy.

Being convinced that there was no place in this part of the island favourable for a settlement, Columbus weighed anchor on the 7th of December, with the intention of seeking the port of La Planta. In consequence of adverse weather, however, he was obliged to put into a harbour about ten leagues east of Monte Christi; and on considering the place, he was struck with its advantages.

The harbour was spacious, and commanded by a point of land protected on one side by a natural rampart of rocks, and on another by an impervious forest, presenting a strong position for a fortress. There were two rivers, one large and the other small, watering a green and beautiful plain, and offering advantageous situations for mills. About a bow-shot from the sea, on the banks of one of the rivers, was an Indian village. The soil appeared to be fertile, the waters to abound in excellent fish, and the climate to be temperate and genial; for the trees were in leaf, the shrubs in flower, and the birds in song, though it was the middle of December. They had not yet become familiarized with the temperature of this favoured island, where the rigours of winter are unknown, where there is a perpetual succession, and even intermixture of fruit and flower, and where smiling verdure reigns throughout the year.

Another grand inducement to form their settlement in this place, was the information received from the Indians of the adjacent village, that the mountains of Cibao, where the gold mines were

situated, lay at no great distance, and almost parallel to the harbour. It was determined, therefore, that there could not be a situation more favourable for their colony. An interesting and animated scene now commenced. The troops and various persons belonging to the land-service, and the various labourers and artificers to be employed in building, were disembarked. The provisions, articles of traffic, guns and ammunition for defence, and implements of every kind, were brought to shore, as were also the cattle and live stock, which had suffered excessively from long restraint, especially the horses. There was a general joy at escaping from the irksome confinement of the ships, and once more treading the firm green earth, and breathing the sweetness of the fields. An encampment was formed on the margin of the plain, around a basin or sheet of water, and in a little while the whole place was in activity. Thus was founded the first christian city of the New World, to which Columbus gave the name of Isabella, in honour of his royal patroness.

A plan was formed, and streets and squares projected, according to which the place was to

be built. The greatest diligence was then exerted in erecting a church, a public store-house, and a residence for the admiral. These were built of stone, the private houses were constructed of wood, plaster, reeds, or such materials as the exigency of the case permitted, and for a short time every one exerted himself with the utmost zeal.

This animated scene was soon overcast by maladies which broke out among the people. Many that were unaccustomed to the sea, had suffered greatly from the confinement of the ships, and the sickness incident to voyages; their healths had likewise been affected by subsisting for a length of time on salt provisions, much of which was in an unwholesome state, and biscuit which was mouldy and decayed. They had been subject to great exposure on the land also, before houses could be built for their reception; for the exhalations of a hot and moist climate, and a new rank soil, the humid vapours from the rivers, and the stagnant air of close overwhelming forests, render the luxuriant wilderness a place of severe trial to constitutions accustomed to old and highly-

cultivated countries. The labour also of building the city, clearing fields, setting out orchards, and planting gardens, having all to be done with great haste, bore hard upon men, who, after tossing so long upon the ocean, stood in need of relaxation and repose. The maladies of the mind, also, mingled with those of the body. Many, as has been shown, had embarked in the expedition with the most visionary and romantic expeditions. Some had anticipated the golden regions of Cipango and Cathay, where they were to amass wealth without toil or trouble; others a region of Asiatic luxury, abounding with wonders and delights; and others a splendid and open career for gallant adventures and chivalrous enterprises. What then was their disappointment to find themselves confined to the margin of an island; surrounded by impracticable forests, doomed to struggle with the rudeness of a wilderness; to toil painfully for mere subsistence, and to attain every comfort by the severest exertion. As to gold, it was brought to them from various quarters, but in small quantities, and it was evidently to be procured only by patient and persevering

labour. All these disappointments sank deep into their hearts; their spirits flagged as their golden dreams melted away; and the gloom of despondency aided the ravages of disease.

Columbus himself did not escape the prevalent maladies. The arduous nature of his enterprise, the responsibility under which he found himself, not merely to his followers, or to his sovereigns, but to the world at large, had kept his mind in continual agitation. The cares of so large a squadron; the incessant vigilance required, not only against the lurking dangers of these unknown seas, but against the passions and follies of his followers, prone to sally forth into excesses in adventurous enterprises, of the kind, the distress he had suffered from the fate of his murdered garrison, and his uncertainty as to the conduct of the barbarous tribes by which he was surrounded; all these had harassed his mind and broken his rest while on board the ship: since landing, new cares and toils had crowded upon him, which, added to the exposures incident to his situation in this new climate, completely overpowered his strength. Still, though confined for

several weeks to his bed by severe illness, his energetic mind rose superior to the sufferings of the body, and he continued to give directions about the building of the city, and to superintend the general concerns of the expedition *.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 50. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., cap. 10. Peter Martyr, decad. 1, l. ii. Letter of Dr. Chanca, &c.

CHAPTER VII.

EXPEDITION OF ALONZO DE OJEDA TO EXPLORE THE INTERIOR OF THE ISLAND. DESPATCH OF THE SHIPS TO SPAIN.

[1493.]

The ships having discharged their cargoes, it was necessary to send the greater part of them back to Spain. Here new anxieties pressed upon the mind of Columbus. He had hoped to find treasures of gold, and precious merchandise, accumulated by the men he had left behind; or at least the sources of wealthy traffic ascertained, by which he would have been enabled speedily to freight his vessels. The destruction of the garrison had defeated all those hopes. He was aware of the extravagant expectations entertained by the sovereigns and the nation. What would be their disappointment when the returning ships brought nothing but a tale of disaster! Something must be done, before the vessels sailed, to keep up the fame of his discoveries, and justify his own magnificent representations. As yet he

knew nothing of the interior of the island, and his sanguine imagination pictured it as abounding with riches. If it were really the island of Cipango, it must contain populous cities, existing very probably in some more cultivated region, beyond the lofty mountains with which it was intersected. All the Indians concurred in mentioning Cibao as the tract of country from whence they derived their gold. The very name of its cacique, Caonabo, signifying "The Lord of the Golden House," seemed to indicate the wealth of his dominions. The tracts where the mines were said to abound, lay at a distance of but three or four days' journey, directly in the interior; Columbus determined, therefore, to send an expedition to explore it, previous to the sailing of the ships. If the result should confirm his hopes, he would then be able to send home the fleet with confidence, bearing tidings of the discovery of the golden mountains of Cibao *.

The person he chose for this enterprise was Don Alonzo de Ojeda, the same cavalier who has been already noticed for his daring spirit and

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., dec. I., l. ii., c. 10.

great bodily force and agility. Delighting in all service of a hazardous and adventurous nature, Ojeda was the more stimulated to this expedition from the formidable character of the mountain cacique, Caonabo, whose dominions he was to penetrate. He set out from the harbour, early in January, 1494, accompanied by a small force of well-armed and determined men, several of them young and spirited cavaliers like himself. He struck directly southward into the interior. For the two first days, the march was toilsome and difficult, through a country abandoned by its inhabitants; for terror of the Spaniards seemed to have extended along the sea-coast. On the second evening they came to a lofty range of mountains, which they ascended by an Indian path, winding up a steep and narrow defile, and they slept for the night at the summit. From hence, the next morning, they beheld the sun rise with great glory over a vast and delicious plain, covered with noble forests, studded with villages and hamlets, and enlivened by the shining waters of the Yagui.

Descending into this plain, Ojeda and his com-

panions boldly entered the Indian villages. The inhabitants, far from being hostile, overwhelmed them with hospitality, and, in fact, impeded their journey by their kindness. They had also to ford many rivers in traversing this plain, so that they were five or six days in reaching the chain of mountains which locked up, as it were, the golden region of Cibao. They penetrated into this district without meeting with any other obstacles than those presented by the rude nature of the country. Caonabo, so redoubtable for his courage and ferocity, must have been in some distant part of his dominions, for he never appeared to dispute their progress. The natives received them with kindness; they were naked and uncivilized, like the other inhabitants of the island, nor were there any traces of the important cities which their imaginations had once pictured forth. They saw, however, ample signs of natural wealth. The sands of the mountain streams glittered with particles of gold; these the natives would skilfully separate, and frankly give to the Spaniards, without expecting a recompense. In some places they picked up large specimens of virgin ore from

the beds of the torrents, and stones streaked and richly impregnated with it. Peter Martyr affirms that he saw a mass of rude gold weighing nine ounces, which Ojeda himself had found in one of the brooks *.

All these were considered as mere superficial washings of the soil, betraying the hidden treasures lurking in the deep veins and rocky bosoms of the mountains, and only requiring the hand of labour to bring them to light. As the object of his expedition was merely to ascertain the nature of the country, Ojeda led back his little band to the harbour, full of enthusiastic accounts of the golden promise of these mountains. A young cavalier of the name of Gorvalan, who had been despatched at the same time on a similar expedition, and who had explored a different tract of country, returned with similar reports. These flattering accounts served for a time to reanimate the drooping and desponding colonists, and induced Columbus to believe that it was only necessary to explore the mines of Cibao, to open inexhaustible sources of riches. He determined, as

* Peter Martyr, decad. 1, l. ii.

soon as his health would permit, to repair in person to the mountains, and seek a favourable site for a mining establishment *.

The season was now propitious for the return of the fleet. Encouraged by the promising prospects he was enabled to hold out, Columbus lost no time in despatching twelve of the ships under the command of Antonio de Torres, retaining only five for the service of the colony.

By this opportunity, he sent home specimens of the gold found among the mountains and rivers of Cibao, and all such fruits and plants as were curious, or appeared to be valuable. He wrote in the most sanguine terms of the expeditions of Ojeda and Gorvalan, the last of whom returned to Spain in the fleet. He repeated his confident anticipations of soon being able to make abundant shipments of gold, of precious drugs, and spices; being prevented at present in the search for them by the sickness of himself and his people, and the cares and labours required in building the infant city. He described the beauty and fertility of the island; its range of noble mountains; its wide,

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 50.

abundant plains, watered by beautiful rivers; the quick fecundity of the soil, evinced in the luxuriant growth of the sugar cane, and of various grains and vegetables brought from Europe.

As it would take some time, however, to obtain provisions from their fields and gardens, and the produce of their live stock, adequate to the subsistence of the colony, which consisted of about a thousand souls; and as they could not accustom themselves to the diet of the natives, Columbus requested present supplies from Spain. Their provisions were already growing scanty. Much of their wine had been lost, from the badness of the casks; and in the infirm state of the colonists they suffered greatly from the want of their accustomed nourishment. There was an immediate necessity of medicines, clothing, and arms. Horses were required, likewise, for the public works, and for military service, it being found of great effect in awing the natives, who had the utmost dread of those animals. He required also an additional number of workmen and mechanics, and men skilled in mining and in smelting and purifying ore. He recommended various

persons to the notice and favour of the sovereigns, among whom was Pedro Margerite, an Arragonian Cavalier of the order of St. Jago, who had a wife and children to be provided for, and who, for his good services, Columbus begged might be appointed to a command in the order to which he belonged. In like manner he entreated patronage for Juan Aguado, who was about to return in the fleet, making particular mention of his merits. From both of these men he was destined to experience the most signal ingratitude. In these ships he sent also the men, women, and children taken in the Caribbee islands, recommending that they should be carefully instructed in the Spanish language and the Christian faith. From the roving and adventurous nature of these people, and their general acquaintance with the various languages of this great archipelago, he thought that, when the precepts of religion and the usages of civilization had reformed their savage manners and cannibal propensities, they might be rendered eminently serviceable as interpreters, and as means of propagating the doctrines of Christianity.

Among the many sound and salutary suggestions in this letter, there is one of a most pernicious tendency, written in that mistaken view of natural rights prevalent at the day, but fruitful of so much wrong and misery in the world. Considering that the greater the number of these cannibal pagans transferred to the catholic soil of Spain, the greater would be the number of souls put in the way of salvation, he proposed to establish an exchange of them as slaves, against live stock, to be furnished by merchants to the colony. The ships to bring such stock were to land nowhere but at the island of Isabella, where the Carib captives would be ready for delivery. A duty was to be levied on each slave for the benefit of the royal revenue. In this way the colony would be furnished with all kinds of live stock free of expense; the peaceful islanders would be freed from warlike and inhuman neighbours; the royal treasury would be greatly enriched; and a vast number of souls would be snatched from perdition, and carried, as it were, by main force to heaven. Such is the strange sophistry by which upright men may sometimes

deceive themselves. Columbus feared the disappointment of the sovereigns in respect to the product of his enterprises, and was anxious to devise some mode of lightening their expenses until he could open some ample source of profit. The conversion of infidels, by fair means or foul, by persuasion or force, was one of the popular tenets of the day; and in recommending the enslaving of the Caribs, Columbus thought that he was obeying the dictates of his conscience, when he was in reality listening to the incitements of his interest. It is but just to add, that the sovereigns did not accord with his ideas, but ordered that the Caribs should be converted like the rest of the islanders—a command which emanated from the merciful heart of Isabella, who ever shewed herself the benign protectress of the Indians.

The fleet put to sea on the 2d of February, 1494. Though it brought back no wealth to Spain, yet expectation was kept alive by the sanguine letter of Columbus, and the specimens of gold which he transmitted: his favourable accounts were corroborated by letters from Friar Boyle, the Doctor Chanca, and other persons of credi-

bility, and by the personal reports of Gorvalan. The sordid calculations of petty spirits were as yet overruled by the enthusiasm of generous minds, captivated by the lofty nature of these enterprises. There was something wonderfully grand in the idea of thus introducing new races of animals and plants, of building cities, extending colonies, and sowing the seeds of civilization and of enlightened empire in this beautiful but savage world. It struck the minds of learned and classical men with admiration, filling them with pleasant dreams and reveries, and seeming to realize the poetical pictures of the olden time. "Columbus," says old Peter Martyr, "has began to build a city, as he has lately written to me, and to sow our seeds and to propagate our animals! Who of us shall now speak with wonder of Saturn, Ceres, and Triptolemus, travelling about the earth to spread new inventions among mankind? Or of the Phœnicians who built Tyre or Sidon? Or of the Tyrians themselves, whose roving desires led them to migrate into foreign lands, to build new cities and establish new communities *?"

* Letter 153. To Pomponius Lætus.

Such were the comments of enlightened and benevolent men, who hailed with enthusiasm the discovery of the New World, not for the wealth it would bring to Europe, but for the field it would open for glorious and benevolent enterprise, and the blessings and improvements of civilized life, which it would widely dispense through barbarous and uncultivated regions.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISCONTENTS AT ISABELLA. MUTINY OF BERNAL DIAZ DE PISA.

[1494.]

The embryo city of Isabella was rapidly assuming a form. A dry stone wall surrounded it, to protect it from any sudden attack of the natives; although the most friendly disposition was evinced by the Indians of the vicinity, who brought supplies of their simple articles of food, and gave them in exchange for European trifles. On the day of the Epiphany, the 6th of February, the church being sufficiently completed, high mass was celebrated, with great pomp and ceremony, by Friar Boyle, and the twelve ecclesiastics. The affairs of the settlement being thus apparently in a regular train, Columbus, though still confined by indisposition, began to make arrangements for his contemplated expedition to the mountains of Cibao, when an unexpected disturbance in his little community for a time engrossed his attention.

The sailing of the fleet for Spain had been a melancholy sight to many whose terms of enlistment compelled them to remain on the island. Disappointed in their expectations of immediate wealth, disgusted with the labours imposed on them, and appalled by the maladies prevalent throughout the community, they began to look with horror upon the surrounding wilderness, as destined to be the grave of their hopes and of themselves. When the last sail disappeared which was bearing their companions back to Spain, they felt as if completely severed from their country, and the tender recollections of home, which had been checked for a time by the novelty and bustle around them, rushed with sudden force upon their minds. To return to Spain became their ruling idea, and the same want of reflection which had hurried them into the enterprise, without inquiring into its real nature, now prompted them to extricate themselves from it, by any means however desperate. Where popular discontents prevail, there is seldom wanting some daring spirit to give them a dangerous direction. One Bernal Diaz de Pisa, a

man of some standing, who had held a civil office about the court, had come out with the expedition as comptroller: he seems to have presumed upon his official powers, and to have had early differences with the admiral. Disgusted with his employment in the colony, he soon made a faction among the discontented, and proposed that they should take advantage of the indisposition of Columbus, to seize upon some or all of the five ships in the harbour, and return in them to Spain. It would be easy to justify their clandestine return, by preferring a complaint against the admiral, representing the fallacy of his enterprises, and accusing him of gross deceptions and exaggerations in his accounts of the countries he had discovered. It is probable that some of these people really considered him culpable of the charges thus fabricated against him; for, in the disappointment of their avaricious hopes, they overlooked the real value of those fertile islands, which were to enrich nations by the produce of their soil. Every country was steril and unprofitable in their eyes, that did not immediately teem with gold. Though they had continual

proofs in the specimens brought by the natives to the settlement, or furnished to Ojeda and Gorvalan, that the rivers and mountains in the interior abounded with ore, yet even these daily proofs were falsified in their eyes. One Fermin Cado, a wrong-headed and obstinate man, who had come out as assayer and purifier of metals, had imbibed the same prejudice against the expedition with Bernal Diaz. He pertinaciously insisted that there was no gold in the island; or at least that it was found in such inconsiderable quantities as not to repay the search. He declared that the large grains of virgin ore brought by the natives had been melted; that they had been the slow accumulation of many years, having remained a long time in the families of the Indians, and been handed down from generation to generation. Other specimens, of a very large size, he pronounced of a very inferior quality, and that they had been debased with brass by the natives. Thus the words of this man outweighed the evidence of facts; and many joined him in the belief that the island was really destitute of gold. It was not until some time afterwards that the real character

of Fermin Cado was ascertained, and the discovery made, that his ignorance was at least equal to his obstinacy and his presumption—qualities which are apt to enter largely into the compound of a meddlesome and mischievous man *.

Encouraged by such substantial co-operation, a number of the turbulent spirits of the colony concerted to carry the plan into immediate effect, and to take possession of the ships and make sail for Europe. The influence of Bernal Diaz de Pisa at court would obtain for them a favourable hearing, and they trusted to their unanimous representations, to prejudice Columbus in the opinion of the public, ever fickle in its smiles, and most ready to turn suddenly and capriciously from the favourite it has most idolized.

Fortunately this mutiny was discovered before it proceeded to action. Columbus immediately ordered the ringleaders to be arrested. On making investigations, a memorial or information against himself, full of slanders and misrepresentations, was found concealed in the buoy of one of the ships. It was in the handwriting of Bernal

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 120, 122, MS.

Diaz. The admiral conducted himself with great moderation. Out of respect to the rank and station of Diaz, he forbore to inflict any punishment on him; but confined him on board one of the ships, to be sent to Spain for trial, together with the process or investigation of his offence, and the seditious memorial which had been discovered. Several of the inferior mutineers were punished according to the degree of their culpability, but not with the severity which their offence deserved. To guard against any recurrence of a similar attempt, Columbus ordered that all the guns and naval munitions should be taken out of four of the vessels, and put into the principal ship, which was given in charge to persons in whom he could place implicit confidence *.

This was the first time Columbus exercised the right of punishing delinquents in his new government, and it immediately awakened the most violent animadversions. His measures, though necessary for the general safety, and characterized by the greatest lenity, were censured as arbitrary and vindictive. Already the disadvan-

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., c. 11. Hist. del Almirante, c. 50.

tage of being a foreigner among the people he was to govern was clearly manifested. He had national prejudices to encounter, of all others the most general and illiberal. He had no natural friends to rally round him; whereas the mutineers had connexions in Spain, friends in the colony, and met with sympathy in every discontented mind. An early hostility was thus engendered against Columbus, which continued to increase throughout his life, and the seeds were sown of a series of factions and mutinies which afterwards distracted the island.

CHAPTER IX.

EXPEDITION OF COLUMBUS TO THE MOUNTAINS OF CIBAO.

[1494.]

HAVING at length recovered from his long illness, and the mutiny at the settlement being effectually checked, Columbus prepared for his immediate departure for Cibao. He intrusted the command of the city and the ships, during his absence, to his brother Don Diego, appointing able persons to counsel and assist him. Don Diego is represented by Las Casas, who knew him personally, as a man of great merit and discretion, of a gentle and pacific disposition, and more characterized by simplicity than shrewdness. He was sober in his attire, wearing almost the dress of an ecclesiastic, and Las Casas thinks he had secret hopes of preferment in the church*; indeed Columbus intimates as much when he mentions him in his will. As the admiral intended to

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i., c. 82. MS.

build a fortress in the mountains, and to form an establishment for working the mines, he took with him the necessary artificers, workmen, miners, munitions, and implements. He was also about to enter the territories of the dreaded Caonabo: it was important, therefore, to take with him a force that should not only secure him against any warlike opposition, but that should spread through the country a formidable idea of the power of the white men, and deter the Indians from any future act of violence, either towards communities or wandering individuals whom chance might throw into their power. Every healthy person, therefore, who could be spared from the settlement, was put in requisition, together with all the cavalry that could be mustered; and every arrangement was made to strike the savages with the display of military splendour.

On the 12th of March, Columbus set out at the head of about four hundred men well armed and equipped, with shining helmets and corslets; with arquebuses, lances, swords, and cross-bows, and followed by a multitude of the neighbouring Indians. They sallied forth from the city in

battle array, with banners flying, and sound of drum and trumpet. Their march for the first day was across the plain which lay between the sea and the mountains, fording two rivers, and passing through a fair and verdant country. They encamped in the evening, in the midst of pleasant fields, at the foot of a wild and rocky pass of the mountains.

The ascent of this rugged defile presented formidable difficulties to the little army, encumbered as it was with various implements and munitions. There was nothing but an Indian foot-path, winding among rocks and precipices, or through brakes and thickets, entangled by the rich vegetation of a tropical forest. A number of high spirited young cavaliers volunteered to open a route for the army. The youthful cavaliers of Spain were accustomed to this kind of service in the Moorish wars, where it was often necessary on a sudden to open roads for the march of troops, and the conveyance of artillery across the mountains of Granada. Throwing themselves in the advance with labourers and pioneers, whom they stimulated by their example, as well as by promises of liberal

reward, they soon constructed the first road formed in the New World; and which was called El puerto de los Hidalgos, or the pass of gentlemen, in honour of the gallant cavaliers who effected it*.

On the following day, the army toiled up this steep defile, and arrived where the gorge of the mountain opened into the interior. Here a land of promise suddenly burst upon their view. It was the same glorious prospect which had delighted Ojeda and his companions. Below lay a vast and delicious plain, painted and enamelled, as it were, with all the rich variety of tropical vegetation. The magnificent forests presented that mingled beauty and majesty of vegetable forms known only to these generous climates. Palms of prodigious height, and spreading mahogany trees, towered from amid a wilderness of variegated foliage. Universal freshness and verdure were maintained by numerous streams, which meandered gleaming through the deep bosom of the woodland; while various

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 50. Hidalgo, i. e., Hijo de Algo, literally, "a son of somebody," in contradistinction to an obscure and low-born man, a son of nobody.

villages and hamlets, peeping from among the trees, and the smoke of others rising out of the midst of the forests, gave signs of a numerous population. The luxuriant landscape extended as far as the eye could reach, until it appeared to melt away and mingle with the horizon. The Spaniards gazed with rapture upon this soft voluptuous country which seemed to realize their ideas of a terrestrial paradise; and Columbus, struck with its vast extent, gave it the name of the Vega Real, or Royal Plain *.

Having descended the rugged pass, the army issued upon the plain, in military array, with great clangour of warlike instruments. When the Indians beheld this shining band of warriors, glittering in steel, emerging from the mountains with prancing steeds and flaunting banners, and heard, for the first time, their rocks and forests echoing to the din of drum and trumpet, they might well have taken such a wonderful pageant for a supernatural vision.

In this way Columbus disposed his forces whenever he approached a populous village, placing

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i., c. 90, MS.

the cavalry in front, for the horses inspired a mingled terror and admiration among the natives. Las Casas observes, that at first they supposed the rider and his horse to be one animal, and nothing could exceed their astonishment at seeing the horseman dismount; a circumstance which shows that the alleged origin of the ancient fable of the Centaurs is at least founded in nature. On the approach of the army the Indians generally fled with terror, and took refuge in their houses. Such was their simplicity, that they merely put up a slight barrier of reeds at the portal, and seemed to consider themselves perfectly secure. Columbus, pleased to meet with such artlessness, ordered that these frail barriers should be scrupulously respected, and the inhabitants allowed to remain in their fancied security*. By degrees their fears were allayed through the mediation of their interpreters, and the distribution of trifling presents. Their kindness and gratitude could not then be exceeded, and the march of the army was continually retarded by the hospitality of the numerous villages through which it passed. Such was

* Las Casas, lib. sup. l. i., c. 90.

the frank communion among these people, that the Indians who accompanied the army entered without ceremony into the houses, helping themselves to anything of which they stood in need, without exciting surprise or anger in the inhabitants: the latter offered to do the same with respect to the Spaniards, and seemed astonished when they met a repulse. This, it is probable, was the case merely with respect to articles of food; for we are told that the Indians were not careless in their notions of property, and the crime of theft was one of the few which were punished among them with great severity. Food, however, is generally open to free participation in savage life, and is rarely made an object of barter, until habits of trade have been introduced by the white men. The untutored savage, in almost every part of the world, scorns to make a traffic of hospitality.

After a march of five leagues across this plain, they arrived at the banks of a large and beautiful stream, called by the natives the Yagui, but to which the admiral gave the name of the River of Reeds. He was not aware that it was the same stream, which, after winding through the Vega,

falls into the sea near Monte Christi, and which, in his first voyage, he had named the River of Gold. On its green banks the army encamped for the night, animated and delighted with the beautiful scenes through which they had passed. They bathed and sported in the waters of the Yagui, enjoying the amenity of the surrounding landscape, and the delightful breezes which prevail in that genial season. "For though there is but little difference," observes Las Casas, "from one month to another in all the year in this island, and in most parts of these Indias, yet in the period from September to May, it is like living in paradise*."

On the following morning they crossed this stream by the aid of canoes and rafts, swimming the horses over. For two days they continued their march through the same kind of rich level country, diversified by noble forests, and watered by abundant streams, several of which descended from the mountains of Cibao, and were said to bring down gold dust mingled with their sands. To one of these, the limpid waters of which ran over a bed of smooth round pebbles, Columbus

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. l. i., c. 90. MS.

gave the name of Rio Verde, or Green River, from the verdure and freshness of its banks. In the course of this march they passed through numerous villages, where they experienced generally the same reception. The simple inhabitants fled at their approach, putting up their slight barricadoes of reeds, but, as before, they were easily won to familiarity, and tasked their limited means to entertain the strangers.

Thus penetrating into the midst of this great island, where every scene presented the wild luxuriance of beautiful but uncivilized nature, they arrived on the evening of the second day at a chain of lofty and rugged mountains, which formed a kind of barrier to the Vega. These Columbus was told were the golden mountains of Cibao, whose region commenced at their rocky summits. The country now began to grow rough and difficult, and the people being way-worn, they encamped for the night at the foot of a steep defile, which led up into the mountains, and pioneers were sent in advance to open a road for the army. From this place they sent back mules for a supply of bread and wine, their provisions beginning to

grow scanty, for they had not as yet accustomed themselves to the food of the natives, which was afterwards found to be very nutritious, and well suited to the climate.

On the next morning they resumed their march up a narrow and steep glen, winding among craggy rocks, where they were obliged to lead the horses. Arrived at the summit, they once more enjoyed a prospect of the delicious Vega, which here presented a still grander appearance, stretching far and wide on either hand, like a vast verdant lake. This noble plain, according to Las Casas, is eighty leagues in length, and from twenty to thirty in breadth, and of incomparable beauty.

They now entered Cibao, the famous region of gold, which, as if nature delighted in contrarieties, displayed a miser-like poverty of exterior, in proportion to its hidden treasures. Instead of the soft luxuriant landscape of the Vega, they beheld chains of rocky and steril mountains, scantily clothed with lofty pines. The trees in the valleys also, instead of possessing the rich tufted foliage common to other parts of the island, were meagre

and dwarfish, excepting such as grew on the banks of streams. The very name of the country bespoke the nature of the soil,—Cibao, in the language of the natives, signifying a stone. Still, however, there were deep glens and shady clefts among the mountains, watered by the most limpid rivulets, where the green herbage, and the strips of woodland, were the more delightful to the eye from the neighbouring sterility. But what consoled the Spaniards for the asperity of the soil, was to observe particles of gold glittering among the sands of those crystal streams, which, though scanty in quantity, they regarded as earnests of the wealth locked up within the mountains.

The natives having been previously visited by the exploring party under Ojeda, came forth to meet them with great alacrity, bringing them food, and, above all, grains and particles of gold which they had collected in the brooks and torrents, seeing how eagerly that metal was coveted by the Spaniards. From the quantities of gold dust in every stream, Columbus was convinced there must be several mines in the vicinity. He had met with specimens of amber and lapis

lazuli, though in very small quantities, and thought that he had discovered a mine of copper. He was now about eighteen leagues from the settlement; the rugged nature of the mountains made a communication, even from this distance, laborious. He gave up the idea, therefore, of penetrating further into the country, and determined to establish a fortified post in this neighbourhood, with a large number of men, as well to work the mines as to explore the rest of the province. He accordingly selected a pleasant situation on an eminence almost entirely surrounded by a small river called the Yanique, the waters of which were as pure as if distilled, and the sound of its current musical to the ear. In its bed were found curious stones of various colours, large masses of beautiful marble, and pieces of pure jasper. From the foot of the height extended one of those graceful and verdant plains, called by the Indians Savannahs, which were freshened and fertilized by the river *.

On this eminence Columbus ordered a strong fortress of wood to be erected, capable of defence against any attack of the natives, and protected

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 90. MS.

by a deep ditch on the side which the river did not secure. To this fortress he gave the name of St. Thomas, intended as a pleasant, though pious, reproof of the incredulity of Firmin Cado and his doubting adherents, who obstinately refused to believe that the island produced gold, until they beheld it with their eyes and touched it with their hands *.

The natives, having heard of the arrival of the Spaniards in their vicinity, came flocking from various parts, anxious to obtain European trinkets. The admiral signified to them that anything would be given in exchange for gold; upon hearing this some of them ran to a neighbouring river, and gathering and sifting its sands, returned in a little while with considerable quantities of gold dust. One old man brought two pieces of virgin ore, weighing an ounce, and thought himself richly repaid when he received a hawk's-bell. On remarking that the admiral was struck with the size of these specimens, he affected to treat them with contempt, as insignificant, intimating by signs, that in his country, which lay within half a day's

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i., c. 90. MS.

journey, they found pieces of gold as big as an orange. Other Indians brought grains of gold weighing ten and twelve drachms, and declared that in the country from whence they got them, there were masses of ore as large as the head of a child *. As usual, however, these golden tracts were always in some remote valley, or along some rugged and sequestered stream; and the wealthiest spot was sure to be at the greatest distance,—for the land of promise is ever beyond the mountain.

* Peter Martyr, decad. 1, lib. iii.

CHAPTER X.

EXCURSION OF JUAN DE LUXAN AMONG THE MOUNTAINS. CUSTOMS & CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NATIVES. COLUMBUS RETURNS TO ISABELLA.

[1494.]

WHILE the admiral remained among the mountains, superintending the building of the fortress, he despatched a young cavalier of Madrid, named Juan de Luxan, with a small band of armed men, to range about the country, and explore the whole of the province, which, from the reports of the Indians, appeared to be equal in extent to the kingdom of Portugal. Luxan returned, after a few days absence, with the most satisfactory accounts. He had traversed a great part of Cibao, which he had found more capable of cultivation than had at first been imagined. It was generally mountainous, and the soil covered with large round pebbles of a blue colour, yet there was good pasturage in many of the valleys. The mountains also, being watered by frequent

showers, produced grass of surprisingly quick and luxuriant growth, often reaching to the saddles of the horses. The forests seemed to Luxan to be full of valuable spices; he being deceived by the odours emitted by those aromatic plants and herbs which abound in the woodlands of the tropics. There were great vines also, climbing to the very summits of the trees, and bearing clusters of grapes entirely ripe, full of juice, and of a pleasant flavour. Every valley and glen possessed its stream, large or small, according to the size of the neighbouring mountain, and all yielding more or less gold, in small particles, shewing the universal prevalence of that precious metal. Luxan was supposed, likewise, to have learned from the Indians many of the secrets of their mountains; to have been shown the parts where the richest ore was found, and to have been taken to the richest streams. On all these points, however, he observed a discreet mystery, communicating the particulars to no one but the admiral*.

The fortress of St. Thomas being nearly com-

* Peter Martyr, decad. 1, lib. iii.

pleted, Columbus gave it in command to Pedro Margarite, the same cavalier whom he had recommended to the favour of the sovereigns; and left with him a garrison of fifty-six men. He then set out on his return to Isabella. On arriving at the banks of the Rio Verde, or Green River, in the Royal Vega, he found a number of Spaniards on their way to the fortress with supplies. He remained, therefore, a few days in the neighbourhood searching for the best fording place of the river, and establishing a route between the fortress and the harbour. During this time, he resided in the Indian villages, endeavouring to accustom his people to the food of the natives; as well as to inspire the latter with a mingled feeling of good will and reverence for the white men.

From the report of Luxan, Columbus had derived some information concerning the character and customs of the natives, and he acquired still more from his own observations, in the course of his sojourn among the tribes of the mountains and the plains. And here a brief notice of a few of the characteristics and customs of these people may be interesting. They are

given, not merely as observed by the admiral and his officers during this expedition, but as recorded some time afterwards, in a crude dissertation, by a friar of the name of Roman, a poor hermit, as he styled himself, of the order of the Hieronimites, who was one of the colleagues of Father Boyle, and resided for some time in the Vega as a missionary.

Columbus had already discovered the error of one of his opinions concerning these islanders, formed during his first voyage. They were not so entirely pacific, nor so ignorant of warlike arts, as he had imagined. He had been deceived by the enthusiasm of his own feelings, and by the gentleness of Guacanagari and his subjects. The casual descents of the Caribs had compelled the inhabitants of the sea-shore to acquaint themselves with the use of arms. Some of the mountain tribes near the coast, particularly those on the side which looked towards the Caribbee islands, were of a more hardy and warlike character than those of the plains. Caonabo, also, the Carib chieftain, had introduced something of his own warrior spirit into the centre of the island. Yet,

generally speaking, the habits of the people were mild and gentle. If wars sometimes occurred among them, they were of short duration, and unaccompanied by any great effusion of blood, and, in general, they mingled amicably and hospitably with each other.

Columbus had also at first indulged in the error that the natives of Hayti were destitute of all notions of religion, and he had consequently flattered himself that it would be the easier to introduce into their minds the doctrines of Christianity; not aware that it is more difficult to light up the fire of devotion in the cold heart of an atheist, than to direct the flame to a new object, when it is already enkindled. There are few beings, however, so destitute of reflection, as not to be impressed with the conviction of an overruling deity. A nation of atheists never existed. It was soon discovered that these islanders had their creed, though of a vague and simple nature. They believed in one supreme being, who inhabited the sky, who was immortal, omnipotent, and invisible; to whom they ascribed an origin, who

had a mother, but no father*. They never addressed their worship directly to him, but employed inferior deities, called Zemes, as messengers and mediators. Each cacique had his tutelar deity of this order, whom he invoked and pretended to consult in all his public undertakings, and who was reverenced by his people. He had a house apart, as a temple to this deity, in which was an image of his Zemi, carved of wood, of stone, or shaped of clay, and generally of some monstrous and hideous form. Each family and each individual had likewise a particular Zemi, or protecting genius, like the Lares and Penates of the ancients. They were placed in every part of their houses, or carved on their furniture; some had them of a small size, and bound them about their foreheads when they went to battle. They believed their Zemes to be transferable, with all their powers, and often stole them from each other. When the Spaniards came among them, they often hid their idols, lest they should be taken away. They believed that these Zemes presided over every object in nature, each having a parti-

* Escritura de Fr. Roman. Hist. del Almirante.

cular charge or government. They influenced the seasons and the elements, causing steril or abundant years, exciting hurricanes and whirlwinds, and tempests of rain and thunder, or sending sweet and temperate breezes and fruitful showers. They governed the seas and forests, the springs, and fountains, like the Nereids, the Dryads, and Satyrs of antiquity. They gave success in hunting and fishing; they guided the waters of the mountains into safe channels, and led them down to wander through the plains, in gentle brooks and peaceful rivers; or, if incensed, they caused them to burst forth into rushing torrents and overwhelming floods, inundating and laying waste the valleys.

The natives had their Butios, or priests, who pretended to hold communion with these Zemes. They practised rigorous fasts and ablutions, and inhaled the powder, or drank the infusion of a certain herb, which produced a temporary intoxication or delirium. In the course of this process, they professed to have trances and visions, and that the Zemes revealed to them future events, or instructed them in the treatment of maladies.

They were, in general, great herbalists, and well acquainted with the medicinal properties of trees and vegetables. They cured diseases through their knowledge of simples, but always with many mysterious rites and ceremonies, and supposed charms; chanting and burning a light in the chamber of the patient, and pretending to exorcise the malady, to expel it from the mansion, and to send it to the sea or to the mountain*.

Their bodies were painted or tattooed with figures of the Zemes, which were regarded with horror by the Spaniards, as so many representations of the devil; and the Butios, esteemed as saints by the natives, were abhorred by the former as necromancers. These Butios often assisted the caciques in practising deceptions upon their subjects, speaking oracularly through the Zemes, by means of hollow tubes; inspiring the Indians to battle by predicting success, or dealing forth such promises or menaces as might suit the purposes of the chieftain.

There is but one of their solemn religious ceremonies of which any record exists. The cacique

* Oviedo, Cronic. l. v., c. 1.

proclaimed a day when a kind of festival was to be held in honour of his Zemes. His subjects assembled from all parts, and formed a solemn procession; the married men and women decorated with their most precious ornaments, the young females entirely naked. The cacique, or the principal personage, marched at their head, beating a kind of drum. In this way they proceeded to the consecrated house or temple, in which were set up the images of the Zemes. Arrived at the door, the cacique seated himself on the outside, continuing to beat his drum while the procession entered, the females carrying baskets of cakes ornamented with flowers, and singing as they advanced. These offerings were received by the Butios with loud cries, or rather howlings. They broke the cakes, after they had been offered to the Zemes, and distributed the portions to the heads of families, who preserved them carefully throughout the year, as preventive of all adverse accidents. This done, the females advanced, at a given signal, singing songs in honour of the Zemes, or in praise of the heroic actions of their ancient caciques. The whole

ceremony finished by invoking the Zemes to watch over and protect the nation*.

Besides the Zemes, each cacique had three idols or talismans, which were mere stones, but which were held in great reverence by themselves and their subjects. One they supposed had the power to produce abundant harvests, another to remove all pain from women in travail, and the third to call forth rain or sunshine when either was required. Three of these were sent home by Columbus to the sovereigns †.

The ideas of the natives with respect to the creation were vague and undefined. They gave their own island of Hayti priority of existence over all others, and believed that the sun and moon originally issued out of a cavern in the island to give light to the world. This cavern still exists, about seven or eight leagues from Cape François. It is about one hundred and fifty feet in depth, and nearly the same in height, but very narrow. It receives no light but from the entrance, and from a round hole in the roof,

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, l. i., p. 56.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 61.

from whence it was said the sun and moon issued forth to take their places in the sky. The vault was so fair and regular, that it appeared a work of art rather than of nature. In the time of Charlevoix the figures of various Zemes were still to be seen cut in the rocks, and there were the remains of niches, as if to receive statues. This cavern was held in great veneration. It was painted, and adorned with green branches and other simple decorations. There were in it two images or Zemes. When there was a want of rain, the natives made pilgrimages and processions to it, with songs and dances, bearing offerings of fruits and flowers *.

They believed that mankind issued from another cavern, the large men from a great aperture, the small men from a little cranny. They were for a long time destitute of women, but, wandering on one occasion near a small lake, they saw certain animals among the branches of the trees, which proved to be women. On attempting to catch them, however, they were found to be as slippery as eels, so that it was impossible to hold

* Charlevoix, Hist. de St. Domingo, l. i, p. 60.

them. At length they employed certain men, whose hands were rendered rough by a kind of leprosy. These succeeded in securing four of these slippery females, from whom the world was peopled.

While the men inhabited this cavern, they dared only venture forth at night, for the sight of the sun was fatal to them, turning them into trees and stones. There was a cacique, named Vagoniona, who sent one of his men forth from the cave to fish, who lingering at his sport until the sun had risen, was turned into a bird of melodious note, the same that Columbus mistook for the nightingale. They added, that yearly about the time that he had suffered this transformation, he comes in the night, with a mournful song, bewailing his misfortune, which is the cause why that bird always sings in the night season *.

Like most savage nations, they had also a tradition concerning the universal deluge, equally fanciful with most of the preceding; for it is singular how the human mind, in its natural state, is apt to account, by trivial and familiar causes, for great events. They said that there once lived in

* Fray Roman. Hist. del Almirante. P. Martyr, decad. 1, l. ix.

the island a mighty cacique, whose only son conspiring against him, he slew him. He afterwards collected and picked his bones, and preserved them in a gourd, as was the custom of the natives with the relics of their friends. On a subsequent day, the cacique and his wife opened the gourd to contemplate the bones of their son, when, to their astonishment, several fish, great and small, leaped out. Upon this the cacique closed the gourd, and placed it on the top of his house, boasting that he had the sea shut up within it, and could have fish whenever he pleased. Four brothers, however, born at the same birth, and curious intermeddlers, hearing of this gourd, came during the absence of the cacique to peep into it. In their carelessness they suffered it to fall upon the ground, when it was dashed to pieces, and there issued forth a mighty flood, with dolphins, and sharks, and great tumbling whales; and the water spread, until it overflowed the earth, and formed the ocean, leaving only the tops of the mountains uncovered, which are the present islands *.

* Escritura de Fray Roman, potre Heremito.

They had singular modes of treating the dying and the dead. When the life of a cacique was despaired of, they strangled him out of a principle of respect, rather than suffer him to die like the vulgar. Common people were extended in their hammocks, bread and water placed at their head, and they were then abandoned to die in solitude. Sometimes they were carried to the cacique, and if he gave his decision or consent, they were strangled. After death the body of a cacique was opened, dried at a fire, and preserved; of others the head only was treasured up as a memorial, or occasionally a limb. Sometimes the whole body was interred in a cave, with a calabash of water, and a loaf of bread; sometimes it was consumed with fire in the house of the deceased.

They had confused and uncertain notions of the existence of the soul when separated from the body. They believed in the apparitions of the departed at night, or by daylight in solitary places, to lonely individuals; sometimes advancing as if to attack them, but upon the traveller's striking at them they vanished, and he struck merely

against trees or rocks. Sometimes they mingled among the living, and were only to be known by having no navels. The Indians, fearful of meeting with these apparitions, disliked to go about alone, and in the dark. They had an idea of a place of reward, to which the spirits of good men repaired after death, where they were reunited to the spirits of those they had most loved during life, and to all their ancestors. Here they enjoyed uninterruptedly, and in perfection, those pleasures which constituted their felicity on earth. They lived in shady and blooming bowers, with beautiful women, and banqueted on delicious fruits. The paradise of these happy spirits was variously placed, almost every tribe assigning some favourite spot in their native province. Many, however, concurred in describing this region as being near a lake in the western part of the island, in the beautiful province of Xaragua. Here there were delightful valleys, covered with a delicate fruit called the mamey, about the size of an apricot. They imagined that the souls of the deceased remained concealed among the airy and inaccessible cliffs of the mountains during the day,

but descended at night into these happy valleys, to regale on this consecrated fruit. The living were sparing, therefore, in eating of it, lest the souls of their friends should suffer from want of their favourite nourishment *.

The dances to which the natives seemed so immoderately addicted, and which had been at first considered by the Spaniards mere idle pastimes, were found to be often ceremonials of a serious and mystic character. They form indeed a singular and important feature throughout the customs of the aboriginals of the New World. In these are typified, by signs well understood by the initiated, and, as it were, by hieroglyphic action, their historical events, their projected enterprises, their hunting, their ambuscades, and their battles, resembling in some respects the Pyrrhic dances of the ancients. Speaking of the prevalence of these dances among the natives of Hayti, Peter Martyr observes that they performed them to the chant of certain metres and ballads, handed down from generation to generation, in which were rehearsed

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 61. Peter Martyr, d, 1., lib. ix. Charlevoix, Hist. St.-Doming., lib. i.

the deeds of their ancestors. "These rhymes or ballads," he adds, "they call areytos; and as our minstrels are accustomed to sing to the harp and lute, so do they in like manner sing these songs, and dance to the same, playing on timbrels made of shells of certain fishes. These timbrels they call maguey. They have also songs and ballads of love, and others of lamentation or mourning; some also to encourage them to the wars, all sung to tunes agreeable to the matter." It was for these dances, as has been already observed, that they were so eager to procure hawks'-bells, suspending them about their persons, and keeping time with their sound to the cadence of the singers. This mode of dancing to a ballad has been compared to the dances of the peasants in Flanders during the summer, and to those prevalent throughout Spain to the sound of the castanets, and the wild popular chants said to be derived from the Moors; but which, in fact, existed before their invasion, among the Goths who overran the peninsula *.

The earliest history of almost all nations has

* Mariana, Hist. Esp., l. v., c. I.

generally been preserved by rude heroic rhymes and ballads, and by the lays of the minstrels; and such was the case with the areytos of the Indians. "When a cacique died," says Oviedo, "they sang in dirges his life and actions, and all the good that he had done was recollected. Thus they formed the ballads or areytos which constituted their history *. Some of these ballads were of a sacred character, containing their traditional notions of theology, and the superstitions and fables which comprised their religious creeds. None were permitted to sing these but the sons of caciques, who were instructed in them by their Butios. They were chanted before the people on solemn festivals, like those already described, accompanied by the sound of a kind of drum, made from a hollow tree †.

Such are a few of the characteristics remaining in record of these simple people, who perished from the face of the earth before their customs and creeds were thought of sufficient importance to be

* Oviedo, Cron. de las Indias, lib. v., ch. 3.

† Fray Roman. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 61. P. Martyr, decad. 1, l. ix. Herrera, Hist. Ind., d. 1, l. iii., c. 4. Oviedo, l. v., c. 1.

investigated. The present work does not profess to enter into detailed accounts of the countries and people discovered by Columbus, otherwise than as they may be useful for the illustration of his history; and perhaps the foregoing are carried to an unnecessary length, but they may serve to give greater interest to the subsequent transactions of the island.

Many of these particulars, as has been observed, were collected by the admiral and his officers, during their excursion among the mountains and their sojourn in the plain. The natives appeared to them a singularly idle and improvident race, indifferent to most of the objects of human anxiety and toil. They were impatient of all kinds of labour, scarcely giving themselves the trouble to cultivate the yuca root, the maize, and the potatoe, which formed the main articles of subsistence. For the rest, their streams abounded with fish; they caught the utia or coney, the guana, and various birds; and they had a perpetual banquet from the fruits spontaneously produced by their groves. Though the air was sometimes cold among the mountains, yet they preferred submit-

ting to a little temporary suffering, rather than take the trouble to weave garments from the gossampine cotton which abounded in their forests. Thus they loitered away existence in vacant inactivity, under the shade of their trees, or amusing themselves occasionally with various games and dances.

In fact, they were destitute of all powerful motives to toil, being free from most of those wants which doom mankind in civilized life, or in less genial climes, to incessant labour. They had no steril winter to provide against, particularly in the valleys and the plains, where, according to Peter Martyr, " the island enjoyed perpetual spring-time, and was blessed with continual summer and harvest. The trees preserved their leaves throughout the year, and the meadows continued always green." " There is no province, nor any region," he again observes, " which is not remarkable for the majesty of its mountains, the fruitfulness of its vales, the pleasantness of its hills, and delightful plains, with abundance of fair rivers running through them. There never was any noisome animal found in it, nor yet any ravening

four-footed beast; no lion, nor bear; no fierce tigers, nor crafty foxes, nor devouring wolves, but all things blessed and fortunate *."

In the soft regions of the Vega, the circling seasons brought each its store of fruits; and while some were gathered in full maturity, others were ripening on the boughs, and buds and blossoms gave promise of still future abundance. What need was there of garnering up and anxiously providing for coming days, to men who lived in a perpetual harvest? What need too of toilfully spinning or labouring at the loom, where a genial temperature prevailed throughout the year, and neither nature nor custom prescribed the necessity of clothing?

The hospitality which characterize men in such a simple and easy mode of existence, was evinced towards Columbus and his followers during their sojourn in the Vega. Wherever they went it was a continual scene of festivity and rejoicing. The natives hastened from all parts, bearing their presents, and laying the treasures of their groves, and streams, and mountains, at the feet of beings

* P. Martyr, decad. 3, l. ix., translated by R. Eden. London, 1555.

whom they still considered as descended from the skies to bring blessings to their island.

Having accomplished the purposes of his residence in the Vega, Columbus, at the end of a few days, took leave of its hospitable inhabitants, and resumed his march for the harbour, returning with his little army through the lofty and rugged gorge of the mountains called the Pass of the Hidalgos. As we accompany him in imagination over the rocky height, from whence the Vega first broke upon the eye of the Europeans, we cannot help pausing to cast back a look of mingled pity and admiration over this beautiful but devoted region. The dream of natural liberty, of ignorant content, and loitering idleness, was as yet unbroken, but the fiat had gone forth; the white man had penetrated into the land; avarice, and pride, and ambition, and pining care, and sordid labour, were soon to follow, and the indolent paradise of the Indian to disappear for ever.

CHAPTER XI.

ARRIVAL OF COLUMBUS AT ISABELLA. SICKNESS OF THE COLONY.

[1494.]

It was on the 29th of March that Columbus arrived at Isabella, highly satisfied with his expedition into the interior. The appearance of every thing in the vicinity of the harbour was calculated to increase his anticipations of future prosperity. The plants and fruits of the Old World, which he was endeavouring to introduce into the island, gave promise of rapid increase. The orchards, fields and gardens, were in a great state of forwardness. The seeds of various fruits had produced young plants; the sugar-cane had prospered exceedingly in the soil; a native vine, trimmed and dressed with care, had yielded grapes of tolerable flavour; and cuttings from European vines already began to form their clusters. On the 30th of March a husbandman brought to Columbus ears of wheat which had been sown in the

latter part of January. The smaller kind of garden herbs came to maturity in sixteen days, and the larger kind, such as melons, gourds, pompions, and cucumbers were fit for the table within a month after the seed had been put into the ground. The soil, moistened by brooks and rivers and frequent showers, and stimulated by an ardent sun, possessed those principles of fecundity which surprise the stranger, accustomed to less vigorous climates, by the promptness and prodigality of vegetation.

The admiral had scarcely returned to Isabella, when a messenger arrived from Pedro Margarite, the commander at fort St. Thomas, informing him that the Indians of the vicinity had manifested unfriendly feelings, abandoning their villages, and shunning all intercourse with the white men, and that Caonabo was assembling his warriors, and secretly preparing to attack the fortress. The fact was, that the moment the admiral had departed, the Spaniards, no longer awed by his presence, had, as usual, listened only to their passions, and had exasperated the natives by wresting from them their gold, and wronging

them with respect to their women. Caonabo also had seen with impatience these detested intruders, planting their standard in the very midst of his mountains, and he knew that he had nothing to expect from them but vengeance.

The tidings from Margarite, however, caused but little solicitude in the mind of Columbus. From what he had seen of the Indians in the interior, he had no apprehensions from their hostility. He knew their weakness and their awe of white men, and above all, he confided in their terror of the horses, which they looked at with alarm, as ferocious beasts of prey, obedient to the Spaniards, but ready to devour their enemies. He contented himself, therefore, with sending Margarite a reinforcement of twenty men, with a supply of provisions and ammunition, and detaching thirty men to open a road between the fortress and the port.

What gave Columbus real and deep anxiety, was the sickness, the discontent, and dejection which continued to increase in the settlement. The same principles of heat and humidity which gave such fecundity to the fields, were fatal to the

people. The exhalations from undrained marshes, and a vast continuity of forest, and the action of a burning sun upon a reeking vegetable soil, produced intermittent fevers, and various other maladies so trying to European constitutions in the uncultivated countries of the tropics. Many of the Spaniards suffered also under the torments of a disease hitherto unknown to them, the scourge of their licentious intercourse with the Indian females. Thus the greater part of the colonists were either confined by positive illness, or reduced to great debility. The stock of medicines was soon exhausted; there was a lack of medicinal aid, and of the watchful attendance which is even more important than medicine to the sick. Every one who was well, was either engrossed by the public labours, or by his own wants or cares; having to perform all menial offices for himself, even to the cooking of his provisions. The public works, therefore, languished, and it was impossible to cultivate the soil in a sufficient degree to produce a supply of the fruits of the earth. Provisions began to fail, much of the stores brought from Europe had been wasted on board

ship, or suffered to spoil through carelessness. Much had perished on shore from the warmth and humidity of the climate. It seemed impossible for the colonists to accommodate themselves to the food of the natives; and their infirm condition required the aliments to which they had been accustomed. To avert an absolute famine, therefore, it was necessary to put the people on a short allowance even of the damaged and unhealthy provisions which remained. This immediately caused loud and factious murmurs, in which many of those in office, who ought to have supported Columbus in his measures for the common safety, took a leading part: among those was father Boyle, a priest as turbulent as he was crafty. He had been irritated, it is said, by the rigid impartiality of Columbus, who, in enforcing his salutary measures, made no distinction of rank or persons, and put the friar and his household on a short allowance as well as the rest of the community.

In the midst of this general discontent, the bread began to grow scarce. The stock of flour was exhausted, and there was no mode of grinding

corn but by the tedious and toilsome process of the hand-mill. It became necessary, therefore, to erect a mill immediately, and other works were required equally important to the welfare of the settlement. Many of the workmen, however, were ill—some feigned greater sickness than they really suffered; for there was a general disinclination to all kind of labour which was not to produce immediate wealth. In this emergency, Columbus put every healthy person in requisition; and as the cavaliers and gentlemen of rank required food as well as the lower orders, they were called upon to take their share in the common labour. This was considered a cruel degradation by many youthful hidalgos of high blood and haughty spirit, and they refused to obey the summons. Columbus, however, was a strict disciplinarian, and felt the importance of making his authority respected. He resorted, therefore, to strong and compulsory measures, and enforced their obedience. This was another cause of the deep and lasting hostilities that sprang up against him. It aroused the immediate indignation of every person of birth and rank in the colony, and

drew upon him the resentment of several of the proud families of Spain. He was inveighed against as an arrogant and upstart foreigner, who, inflated with a sudden acquisition of power, and consulting only his own wealth and aggrandisement, was trampling upon the rights and dignities of Spanish gentlemen, and insulting the honour of the nation.

Columbus may have been too strict and indiscriminate in his regulations. There are cases in which even justice may become oppressive, and where the severity of the time should be tempered with indulgence. The mere toilsome labours of a common man, became humiliation and disgrace to a Spanish cavalier. Many of these young men had come out, not in the pursuit of wealth, but with romantic dreams inspired by his own representations; hoping, no doubt, to distinguish themselves by heroic achievements and chivalrous adventure, and to continue in the Indies the career of arms which they had commenced in the recent wars of Granada. Others had been brought up in soft, luxurious indulgence, in the midst of opulent families, and were little calcu-

lated for the rude perils of the seas, the fatigues of the land, and the hardships, the exposures, and deprivations which attend a new settlement in a wilderness. When they fell ill, their case soon became incurable. The ailments of the body were increased by sickness of the heart. They suffered under the irritation of wounded pride, and the morbid melancholy of disappointed hope; their sick-bed was destitute of all the tender care and soothing attention to which they had been accustomed; and they sank into the grave in all the sullenness of despair, cursing the day that they left their country.

The venerable Las Casas, and Herrera after him, record with much solemnity, a popular belief current in the island at the time of his residence there, and connected with the untimely fate of these cavaliers.

In after years, when the seat of the colony was removed from Isabella on account of its unhealthy situation, the city fell to ruin, and was abandoned. Like all decayed and deserted places, it soon became an object of awe and superstition to the common people, and no one ventured to

enter its gates. Those who passed near it, or hunted the wild swine which abounded in the neighbourhood, declared that they heard appalling voices issue from within its walls by night and day. The labourers became fearful, therefore, to cultivate the fields adjacent. The story went, adds Las Casas, that two Spaniards happened one day to wander among the ruined edifices of the place; on entering one of the solitary streets they beheld two rows of men, evidently, from their stately demeanour, hidalgos of noble blood, and cavaliers of the court. They were richly attired in the old Castilian mode, with rapiers by their sides, and broad travelling hats, such as were worn at the time. The two men were astonished to behold persons of their rank and appearance apparently inhabiting that desolate place, unknown to the people of the island. They saluted them, and inquired when and whence they had arrived. The cavaliers maintained a gloomy silence, but courteously returned the salutation by raising their hands to their sombreros or hats, in taking off which their heads came off also, and their bodies stood decapitated. The whole phan-

tom assemblage then vanished. So great was the astonishment and horror of the beholders, that they had nearly fallen dead, and remained stupified for several days *.

The foregoing legend is curious, as illustrating the superstitious character of the age, and especially of the people with whom Columbus had to act. It shows, also, the deep and gloomy impression made upon the minds of the common people by the death of these cavaliers, which operated materially to increase the unpopularity of Columbus; as it was mischievously represented, that they had been seduced from their homes by his delusive promises, and sacrificed to his private interests.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 92., MS., Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., c. 12.

CHAPTER XII.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE SPANISH FORCES IN THE INTERIOR. PREPARATIONS FOR A VOYAGE TO CUBA.

[1494.]

THE increasing discontents of the motley population of Isabella, and the rapid consumption of the scanty stores which remained, were causes of great anxiety to Columbus. He was desirous of proceeding on another voyage of discovery, but it was indispensable, before sailing, to place the affairs of the island in such a state as to secure tranquillity. He determined, therefore, to send all the men that could be spared from Isabella, into the interior; with orders to visit the territories of the different caciques, and to explore the island. By this means they would be roused and animated; they would become accustomed to the climate and to the diet of the natives, and such a force would be displayed as to overawe the machinations of Caonabo or any other hostile cacique. In pursuance of this plan, every healthy person,

not absolutely necessary to the concerns of the city or the care of the sick, was put under arms, and a little army mustered, consisting of two hundred and fifty cross-bow men, one hundred and ten arquebusiers, sixteen horsemen, and twenty officers. The general command of the forces was intrusted to Pedro Margarite, in whom Columbus had great confidence as a noble Catalonian, and a knight of the order of Santiago. Alonzo de Ojeda was to conduct the army to the fortress of St. Thomas, where he was to succeed Margarite in the command, and the latter was to proceed with the main body of the troops on a military tour, in which he was particularly to explore the province of Cibao, and subsequently the other parts of the island.

Columbus wrote a long and earnest letter of instructions to Margarite, by which to govern himself in a service requiring such great circumspection. He charged him above all things to observe the greatest justice and discretion in respect to the Indians, protecting them from all wrong and insult, and treating them in such a manner as to secure their confidence and friend-

ship. At the same time they were to be made to respect the property of the white men, and all thefts were to be severely punished. Whatever provisions were required from them for the subsistence of the army, were to be fairly purchased by persons whom the admiral appointed for that purpose; the purchases were to be made in the presence of the agent of the comptroller. If the Indians refused to sell the necessary provisions, then Margarite was to interfere and compel them to do so, acting, however, with all possible gentleness, and soothing them by kindness and caresses. No traffic was to be allowed between individuals and the natives, it being displeasing to the sovereigns and injurious to the service; and it was always to be kept in mind that their majesties were more desirous of the conversion of the natives than of any riches to be derived from them.

A strict discipline was to be maintained in the army, all breach of orders to be severely punished, the men to be kept together and not suffered to wander from the main body either singly or in small parties, so as to expose themselves to be cut off by the natives; for it had been observed,

that, though these people were pusillanimous, yet there were no people so apt to be perfidious and cruel as cowards; seldom sparing the life of an enemy when in their power *.

These judicious instructions, which, if followed, might have preserved an amicable intercourse with the natives, are more especially deserving of notice, because Margarite disregarded them all, and by his disobedience brought trouble on the colony, obloquy on the nation, destruction on the Indians, and unmerited censure on Columbus.

In addition to the foregoing orders, there were particular directions for the surprising and securing of the persons of Caonabo and his brothers. The warlike character of that chieftain, his artful policy, extensive power, and implacable hostility, rendered him a dangerous enemy. The measures proposed were not the most open and chivalrous, but Columbus thought himself justified in opposing stratagem to stratagem with a subtle and sanguinary foe.

On the 9th of April, Alonzo de Ojeda sallied forth from Isabella at the head of the forces,

* Letter of Columb. Navarrete Collec., t. ii., Document No. 72.

amounting to nearly four hundred men. On arriving at the Rio del Oro in the Royal Vega, he learnt that three Spaniards coming from the fortress of St. Thomas, had been robbed of their effects by five Indians, whom a neighbouring cacique had sent to assist them in fording the river; and that the cacique, instead of punishing the thieves, had countenanced them and shared their booty. Ojeda was a quick, impetuous soldier, whose ideas of legislation were all of a military kind. Having seized one of the thieves, he inflicted summary justice upon him by ordering his ears to be cut off in the public square of the village: he then secured the cacique, his son, and nephew, and sent them in chains to the admiral, which being accomplished, he pursued his march to the fortress.

In the mean time the prisoners arrived at Isabella in deep dejection. They were accompanied by a neighbouring cacique, who, relying upon the merit of various acts of kindness which he had shewn to the Spaniards, came to plead for their forgiveness. His intercessions appeared to be of no avail. Columbus felt the importance of

striking awe into the minds of the natives with respect to the property of the white men. He ordered, therefore, that the prisoners should be taken to the public square with their hands tied behind them, their crime and punishment proclaimed by the crier, and their heads struck off. Nor was this a punishment disproportioned to their own ideas of justice, for we are told that the crime of theft was held in such abhorrence among them, that, though not otherwise sanguinary in their laws, they punished it with impalement*. It is not probable, however, that Columbus really meant to carry the sentence into effect. At the place of execution the prayers and tears of the friendly cacique were redoubled, pledging himself that there should be no repetition of the offence. The admiral at length made a merit of yielding to his entreaties, and released the prisoners. Just at this juncture a horseman arrived from the fortress, who in passing by the village of the captive cacique, had found five Spaniards in the power of the Indians. The sight of his horse had put the multitude to flight, though upwards

* Oviedo, Hist. Ind., lib. v., cap. 3.

of four hundred in number. He had pursued the fugitives, wounding several with his lance, and had brought off his countrymen in triumph.

Convinced by this circumstance that nothing was to be apprehended from the hostilities of these timid people as long as his orders were obeyed, and confiding in the distribution he had made of his forces, both for the tranquillity of the colony and the island, Columbus prepared to depart on the prosecution of his discoveries. To direct the affairs of the island during his absence, he formed a junta, of which his brother Don Diego was president, and Father Boyle, Pedro Fernandez Coronel, Alonzo Sanchez Caravajal, and Juan de Luxan, were councillors. He left his two largest ships in the harbour, being of too great a size and draft of water to explore unknown coasts and rivers, and he took with him three caravels, the Niña or Santa Clara, the San Juan, and the Cordera.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

VOYAGE TO THE EAST END OF CUBA.

[1494.]

Columbus set sail with his little squadron from the harbour of Isabella on the 24th of April, and steered to the westward. The plan of his present expedition was to revisit the coast of Cuba at the point where he had abandoned it on his first voyage, and thence to explore it on the southern side. As has already been observed, he supposed it to be a continent, and the extreme end of Asia, and if so, by following its shores in the proposed direction, he must eventually arrive at Cathay and those other rich and commercial, though semi-barbarous, countries described by Mandeville and Marco Polo *.

After touching at Monte Christi, he anchored

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 123. MS.

on the same day at the disastrous harbour of La Navidad. His object in revisiting this melancholy scene was to obtain an interview with Guacanagari, who he understood had returned to his former residence. He could not be persuaded of the perfidy of that cacique, so deep was the impression made upon his heart by past kindness; he trusted, therefore, that a frank explanation would remove all painful doubts, and restore a friendly intercourse, which would be highly advantageous to the Spaniards in their present time of scarcity and suffering. Guacanagari, however, still maintained his equivocal conduct, absconding at the sight of his ships, and though several of his subjects assured Columbus that the cacique would soon make him a visit, he did not think it advisable to delay his voyage on such an uncertainty.

Pursuing his course, impeded occasionally by contrary winds, he arrived on the 29th at the port of San Nicholas, from whence he beheld the extreme point of Cuba, to which in his preceding voyage he had given the name of Alpha and Omega, but which was called by the natives Baya-

tiquiri, and is now known as Point Maysi. Having crossed the channel, which is about eighteen leagues wide, Columbus sailed along the southern coast of Cuba for the distance of twenty leagues, when he anchored in a harbour, to which, from its size, he gave the name of Puerto Grande, at present called Guantanamo. The entrance was narrow and winding, though deep; the harbour expanded within like a beautiful lake, in the bosom of a wild and mountainous country, covered with trees, some of them in blossom, others bearing fruit. Not far from the shore were two cottages built of reeds, and several fires blazing in various parts of the beach gave signs of inhabitants. Columbus landed, therefore, attended by several men well armed, and by the young Indian interpreter Diego Colon, the native of the island of Guanahani who had been baptized in Spain. On arriving at the cottages, he found them deserted; the fires also were abandoned—not human being was to be seen. The Indians had all fled to the woods and mountains. The sudden arrival of the ships had spread a panic throughout the neighbourhood, and apparently interrupted

the preparations for a rude but plentiful banquet. There were great quantities of fish, utias, and guanas; some suspended to the branches of the trees, others roasting on wooden spits before the fires.

The Spaniards, accustomed of late to slender fare, fell without ceremony on this bounteous feast, thus spread for them, as it were, in the wilderness. They abstained, however, from the guanas, which they still regarded with disgust as a species of serpent, though they were considered so delicate a food by the savages, that, according to Peter Martyr, it was no more lawful for the common people to eat of them, than of peacocks and pheasants in Spain *.

After their repast, as the Spaniards were roving about the vicinity, they beheld about seventy of the natives collected on the top of a lofty rock, and looking down upon them with great awe and amazement. On attempting to approach them, they instantly disappeared among the woods and clefts of the mountain. One, however, more bold or more curious than the rest, lingered on the

* P. Martyr, decad. 1, lib. iii.

brow of the precipice, gazing with timid wonder at the Spaniards, partly encouraged by their friendly signs, but ready in an instant to bound away after his companions.

By order of Columbus, the young Lucayan interpreter advanced and accosted him. The expressions of friendship, in his own language, soon dispelled the apprehensions of the wondering savage. He came to meet the interpreter, and being informed by him of the good intentions of the Spaniards, hastened to communicate the intelligence to his comrades. In a little while they were seen descending from their rocks, and issuing from their forests, approaching the strangers with great gentleness and veneration. Through means of the interpreter, Columbus learnt that they had been sent to the coast by their cacique, to procure fish for a solemn banquet which he was about to give to a neighbouring chieftain, and that they roasted the fish to prevent it from spoiling in the transportation. They seemed to be of the same gentle and pacific character with the natives of Hayti. The ravages that had been made among their provisions by

the hungry Spaniards gave them no concern, for they observed that one night's fishing would replace all the loss. Columbus, however, in his usual spirit of justice, ordered that ample compensation should be made them, and, shaking hands, they parted mutually well pleased *.

Leaving this harbour on the 1st of May, the admiral continued to the westward, sailing along a mountainous coast adorned by beautiful rivers, and indented by those commodious harbours for which this island is so remarkable. As he advanced, the country grew more fertile and populous. The natives crowded to the shores, man, woman, and child, gazing with astonishment at the ships, which glided gently along at no great distance. They held up fruits and provisions, inviting the Spaniards to land; others came off in canoes, bringing cassava bread, fish, and calabashes of water, not for sale, but as offerings to the strangers, whom, as usual, they considered celestial beings descended from the skies. Columbus distributed the customary presents among them, which were received with transports of joy

* Peter Martyr, ubi sup.

and gratitude. After continuing some distance along the coast, he came to another gulf or deep bay, narrow at the entrance and expanding within, surrounded by a rich and beautiful country. There were lofty mountains sweeping up from the sea, but the shores were enlivened by numerous villages, and cultivated to such a degree as to resemble gardens and orchards. In this harbour, which it is probable was the same at present called St. Jago de Cuba, Columbus anchored and passed a night, overwhelmed as usual with the simple hospitality of the natives *.

On inquiring of the people of this coast after gold, they uniformly pointed to the south, and, as far as they could be understood, intimated that a great island lay in that direction where it abounded. The admiral in the course of his first voyage had received information of such an island, which some of his followers had thought might be Babeque, the object of so much anxious search and chimerical expectation. He had felt a strong inclination to diverge from his course and go in quest of it, and this desire increased with every new report.

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 124. MS.

On the following day, therefore, (the 3d of May,) after standing westward to a high cape, he suddenly turned his prow directly south, and abandoning for a time the coast of Cuba, steered off into the broad sea, in quest of this reported island.

CHAPTER II.

DISCOVERY OF JAMAICA.

[1494.]

Columbus had not sailed many leagues before the blue summits of Jamaica began to rise above the horizon. It was two days and nights, however, before he reached the island, filled with admiration, as he gradually drew near, at its vast size, the beauty of its mountains, the majesty of its forests, the fertility of its valleys, and the great number of villages with which the whole face of the country was animated.

On approaching the land, at least seventy canoes, filled with savages gaily painted and decorated with feathers, sallied forth more than a league from shore. They advanced in warlike array, uttering loud yells, and brandishing lances of pointed wood. The mediation of the interpreter, and a few presents to the crew of one of the canoes, which ventured nearer than the rest, soothed this angry armada, and the squadron pursued its

course unmolested. Columbus anchored in a harbour about the centre of the island, to which, from the great beauty of the surrounding country, he gave the name of Santa Gloria *; it is the same at present called St. Ann's Bay.

On the following morning, he weighed anchor at day-break, and coasted westward in search of a sheltered harbour, where his ship could be careened and caulked, as it leaked considerably. After proceeding a few leagues, he found one apparently suitable for the purpose. On sending a boat to sound the entrance, two large canoes, filled with Indians, issued forth to oppose their landing, hurling their lances, but from such distance as to fall short of the Spaniards. Not wishing to proceed to any act of hostility that might prevent future intercourse, Columbus ordered the boat to return on board, and finding there was sufficient depth of water for his ship, entered and anchored in the harbour. Immediately the whole beach was covered with Indians painted with a variety of colours, but chiefly black, some partly clothed with palm leaves, and all wearing tufts

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 125.

and coronets of gay tropical feathers. Unlike the hospitable islanders of Cuba and Hayti, these appeared to partake of the warlike character of the Caribs, manifesting the fiercest hostility, hurling their javelins at the ships, and making the shores resound with their yells and war-hoops.

The admiral reflected that further forbearance might be mistaken for cowardice. It was necessary to careen his ship, and to send men on shore for a supply of water, but previously it was advisable to strike an awe into the savages, that might prevent any molestation from them. As the caravels could not approach sufficiently near to the beach where the Indians were collected, he despatched the boats well manned and armed. These, rowing close to the shore, let fly a volley of arrows from their cross-bows, by which several Indians were wounded, and the rest thrown into confusion. The Spaniards then sprang on shore, and put the whole multitude to flight; giving another discharge of their cross-bows, and letting loose upon them a dog, who pursued them with sanguinary fury *. This is the first instance of

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 125.

the use of dogs against the natives, which were afterwards employed with such cruel effect by the Spaniards in their Indian wars. Columbus now landed and took formal possession of the island, to which he gave the name of Santiago; but it has retained its original Indian name of Jamaica. The harbour, from its commodiousness, he called Puerto Bueno; it was in the form of a horse-shoe, and a river ran in its vicinity *.

During the rest of the day, the neighbourhood remained silent and deserted. On the following morning, however, before sunrise, six Indians were seen on the shore, making signal of amity. They proved to be envoys sent by the caciques with proffers of peace and friendship. These were cordially returned by the admiral; presents of trinkets were sent to the chieftains; and in a little while the harbour again swarmed with the naked and painted multitude, bringing abundance of provisions, similar in kind, but superior in quality, to those of the other islands.

During three days that the ships remained in this harbour, the most amicable intercourse was

* Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

kept up with the natives. They appeared to be more ingenious, as well as more warlike than their neighbours of Cuba and Hayti. Their canoes were better constructed, being ornamented with carving and painting at the bow and stern. Many were of great size, though formed by the trunks of single trees, often from a species of the mahogany. Columbus measured one, which was ninety-six feet long, and eight broad *, hollowed out of one of those magnificent trees which rise like verdant towers amidst the rich forests of the tropics. Every cacique prided himself on possessing a large, canoe of the kind, which he seemed to regard as his ship of state. It is curious to remark the apparently innate difference between these island tribes. The natives of Porto Rico, though surrounded by adjacent islands, and subject to frequent incursions of the Caribs, were yet of a pacific character, and possessed very few canoes; while Jamaica, separated by distance from intercourse with other islands, protected in the same way from the dangers of invasion, and embosomed, as it were, in a peaceful mediterra-

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 124.

nean sea, was inhabited by a warlike race, and surpassed all the other islands in its maritime armaments. His ship being repaired, and a supply of water taken in, Columbus made sail, and continued along the coast to the westward, so close to the shore, that the little squadron was continually surrounded by the canoes of the natives, who came off from every bay, and river, and head-land, no longer manifesting hostility, but anxious to exchange any thing they possessed for European trifles. After proceeding about twenty-four leagues, they approached the western extremity of the island, where the coast bending to the south, the wind became unfavourable for their further progress along the shore. Being disappointed in his hopes of finding gold in Jamaica, and the breeze being fair for Cuba, Columbus determined to return thither, and not to leave it until he had explored its coast to a sufficient distance, to determine the question, whether it were terra firma or an island *. To the last place at which he touched in Jamaica, he gave the name of the Gulf of Buentiempo (or Fair Weather,) on

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 54.

account of the propitious wind which blew for Cuba. Just as he was about to sail, a young Indian came off to the ship, and begged that the Spaniards would take him with them to their country. He was followed by his relations and friends, who endeavoured by the most affecting supplications to dissuade him from his purpose. For some time he was distracted between concern for the distress of his family, and an ardent desire to see the home of these wonderful strangers, which his imagination pictured as a region of celestial delights. Curiosity, and the youthful propensity to rove prevailed; he tore himself from the embraces of his friends, and, that he might not behold the tears of his sisters, hid himself in a secret part of the ship. Touched by this scene of natural affection, and pleased with the enterprising and confiding spirit of the youth, Columbus gave orders that he should be treated with especial kindness *.

It would have been interesting to have known something more of the fortunes of this curious savage, and of the impressions made upon so

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 54.

lively a mind by a first sight of the wonders of civilization. Whether the land of the white men equalled his hopes; whether, as is usual with savages, he pined amidst the splendours of cities for his native forests, and whether he ever returned to the arms of his family. The early Spanish historians seem never to have interested themselves in the feelings or fortunes of these first visitors from the New to the Old World. No further mention is made of this youthful adventurer.

CHAPTER III.

RETURN TO CUBA. NAVIGATION AMONG THE ISLANDS CALLED THE QUEEN'S GARDEN.

[1494.]

SETTING sail from the gulf of Buentiempo, the squadron once more steered for the island of Cuba, and on the 18th of May arrived at a great cape, to which Columbus gave the name of Cabo de la Cruz, which it still retains. Here, landing at a large village, he was well received and entertained by the cacique and his subjects, who had long since heard of himself and his ships. In fact, Columbus found, from the report of this chieftain, that the numerous Indians who had visited his ships during his cruise along the northern coast in his first voyage, had spread the story far and near of these wonderful visitors who had descended from the sky, and had filled the whole island with rumours and astonishment*. The admiral endeavoured to ascertain from this cacique and his people, whe-

* Cura de los Palacios, c. 126.

ther Cuba was an island or a continent. They all replied that it was an island, but of infinite extent; for they declared that no one had ever seen the end of it. This reply, while it manifested their ignorance of the nature of a continent, left the question still in doubt and obscurity. The Indian name of this province of Cuba was Macacar.

Resuming his course to the west on the following day, Columbus came to where the coast suddenly swept away to the north east for many leagues, and then curved round again to the west, forming an immense bay, or rather gulf. Here he was assailed by a violent storm, accompanied by awful thunder and lightning, which in these latitudes seem to rend the very heavens. Fortunately the storm was not of long duration, or his situation would have been perilous in the extreme; for he found the navigation rendered difficult by numerous keys* and sand-banks. These increased as he advanced, until the mariner stationed at the mast-head beheld the sea, as far as the eye could reach, completely studded with

* Keys, from Cayos, rocks which occasionally form small islands on the coast of America.

small islands. Some of them were low, naked, and sandy, others covered with verdure, and others tufted with lofty and beautiful forests. They were of various sizes, from one to four leagues, and were generally the more fertile and elevated, the nearer they were to Cuba. Finding them to increase in number, so as to render it impossible to give names to each, the admiral gave the whole labyrinth of islands, which in a manner enamelled the face of the ocean with variegated verdure, the name of the Queen's Gardens. He thought at first of leaving this archipelago on his right, and standing farther out to sea; but he called to mind that Sir John Mandeville and Marco Polo had mentioned that the coast of Asia was fringed with islands to the amount of several thousand. He persuaded himself that he was among that cluster, and resolved not to lose sight of the main land, by following which, if it were really Asia, he must soon arrive at the dominions of the Grand Khan.

Entering among these islands, therefore, Columbus soon became entangled in the most perplexed navigation, in which he was exposed to

continual perils and difficulties from sand-banks, counter currents, and sunken rocks. The ships were obliged in a manner to grope their way, with men stationed at the mast-head, and the lead continually going. Sometimes they were obliged to shift their course within the hour, to all points of the compass; sometimes they were straitened in a narrow channel, where it was necessary to lower all sail and tow the vessels out, lest they should run aground; notwithstanding all which precautions, they frequently touched upon sand-banks, and were extricated with great difficulty. The variableness of the weather added to the embarrassment of the navigation; though after a little while it began to assume some method in its very caprices. In the morning the wind rose in the east with the sun, and following his course through the day, died away at sunset in the west. Heavy clouds gathered with the approach of evening, sending forth sheets of lightning, and distant peals of thunder, and menacing a furious tempest; but as the moon rose, the whole mass broke away, part melting in a shower of rain, and part dispersing by a breeze which sprang up from the land.

There was much in the character of the surrounding scenery to favour the idea of Columbus, that he was in the Asiatic archipelago. As the ships glided along the smooth and glassy canals which separated these verdant islands, the magnificence of their vegetation, the soft odours which were wafted from flowers, and blossoms, and aromatic shrubs, and the splendid plumage of the scarlet cranes or flamingoes, which abounded in the meadows, and of other tropical birds which fluttered among the groves, resembled what is described of Oriental climes.

These islands were generally uninhabited. They found a considerable village, however, on one of the largest, where they landed on the 22d of May. The houses were abandoned by their inhabitants, who appeared to depend principally on the sea for their subsistence. Large quantities of fish were found in their dwellings, and the adjacent shore was covered with the shells of tortoises. There were also domesticated parrots, and scarlet cranes, and a number of dumb dogs, which it was afterwards found they fattened as an article of food. To this island the admiral gave the name of Santa Marta.

In the course of his voyage among these islands, Columbus beheld one day a number of the natives in a canoe on the still surface of one of the channels, occupied in fishing, and was struck with the singular means they employed. They had a small fish, the flat head of which was furnished with numerous suckers, by which it attached itself so firmly to any object, as to be torn in pieces rather than abandon its hold. Tying a line of great length to the tail of this fish, the Indians permitted it to swim at large; it generally kept near the surface of the water until it perceived its prey, when, darting down swiftly, it attached itself by the suckers to the throat of the fish or to the under shell of a tortoise, nor did it relinquish its prey, until both were drawn up by the fisherman and taken out of the water. In this way the Spaniards witnessed the taking of a tortoise of immense size, and Fernando Columbus affirms that he himself saw a shark caught in the same manner on the coast of Veragua. The fact has been corroborated by the accounts of various navigators; and the same mode of fishing is said to be employed on the eastern coast of Africa, at Mosambique

and at Madagascar. Thus it has been observed, savage people, who probably have never held communication with each other, offer the most striking analogies in their modes of exercising empire over animals *. These fishermen came on board of the ships in a frank and fearless manner. They furnished the Spaniards with a supply of fish, and would cheerfully have given them every thing they possessed. To the admiral's inquiries concerning the geography of those parts, they said that the sea was full of islands to the south and to the west, but as to Cuba it continued running to the westward without any termination.

Having extricated himself from this archipelago, Columbus steered for a mountainous part of the island of Cuba about fourteen leagues distant, where he landed at a large village on the 3d of June. Here he was received with that kindness and amity which distinguished the inhabitants of Cuba, whom he extolled above all the other islanders for their mild and pacific character. Their very animals, he said, were tamer, as well as larger and better, than those of the other

* Humboldt, Essai Politique sur l'Ile de Cuba, t. i., p. 364.

islands. Among the various articles of food which the natives brought with joyful alacrity from all parts to the Spaniards, were stock-doves of uncommon size and flavour; perceiving something peculiar in their taste, Columbus ordered the crops of several newly killed to be opened, in which were found sweet spices—favourable indications of the productions of the country.

While the crews of the boats were procuring water and provisions, Columbus sought to gather information from the venerable cacique, and several of the old men of the village. They told him that the name of their province was Ornofay; that further on to the westward the sea was again covered with innumerable islands, and had but little depth. As to Cuba, none of them had ever heard that it had an end to the westward—forty moons would not suffice to reach to its extremity; in fact, they considered it as interminable. They observed, however, that the admiral would receive more ample information from the inhabitants of Mangon, an adjacent province, which lay towards the west. The quick apprehension of Columbus was struck with the sound of this name, it resembled that of

Mangi, the richest province of the Grand Khan, bordering on the Ocean. He made further inquiries concerning the region of Mangon, and understood the Indians to say, that it was inhabited by people who had tails like animals, and wore garments to conceal them. He recollected that Sir John Mandeville, in his account of the remote parts of the East, had recorded a story of the same kind as current among certain naked tribes of Asia, and told by them in ridicule of the garments of their civilized neighbours, which they could only conceive useful as concealing some bodily defect *. He became, therefore, more confident than ever, that, by keeping along the coast to the westward, he should eventually arrive at the civilized realms of Asia. He flattered himself with the hopes of finding, in this region of Mangon, the rich province of Mangi, and in its people with tails and garments, the long-robed inhabitants of the empire of Tartary.

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 127.

CHAPTER IV.

COASTING OF THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF CUBA.

[1494.]

Animated by one of the pleasing illusions of his ardent imagination, Columbus pursued his voyage, with a prosperous breeze, along the supposed continent of Asia. He was now opposite that part of the southern side of Cuba, where, for nearly thirty-five leagues, the navigation is unembarrassed by banks and islands. To his left was the broad and open sea, whose dark blue colour gave token of ample depth; to his right extended the richly-wooded province of Ornofay, gradually sweeping up into a range of interior mountains; the verdant coast watered by innumerable streams, and studded with Indian villages. The appearance of the ships spread wonder and joy along the sea-shore. The natives hailed with acclamations the arrival of these wonderful beings on their coast, whose fame had circulated more or less throughout the island, and who brought

with them the blessings of heaven. They came off swimming, or in their canoes, to offer the fruits and productions of the land, and regarded the white men almost with adoration. After the usual evening shower, when the breeze blew from the shore and brought off the sweetness of the land, it bore with it also the distant songs of the natives and the sound of their rude music, as they were probably celebrating with their national chants and dances, the arrival of the white men. So delightful were these spicy odours and cheerful sounds to Columbus, who was at present open to all pleasurable influences, that he declared the night passed away as a single hour *.

It is impossible to resist noticing the striking contrasts which are sometimes forced upon the mind. The coast here described so populous and animated, rejoicing in the visit of the discoverers, is the same that extends westward of the city of Trinidad, along the gulf of Xagua. All is now silent and deserted: civilization, which has covered some parts of Cuba with glittering cities, has rendered this a solitude. The whole race of

* Cura de los Palacios.

Indians has long since passed away, pining and perishing beneath the domination of the strangers whom they welcomed so joyfully to their shores. Before me lies the account of a night recently passed on this very coast, by a celebrated traveller, but with what different feelings from those of Columbus. "I past," says he, "a great part of the night upon the deck. What deserted coasts! not a light to announce the cabin of a fisherman. From Batabano to Trinidad, a distance of fifty leagues, there does not exist a village. Yet in the time of Columbus this land was inhabited even along the margin of the sea. When pits are digged in the soil, or the torrents plough open the surface of the earth, there are often found hatchets of stone and vessels of copper, relics of the ancient inhabitants of the island *."

For the greater part of two days the ships swept along this open part of the coast, traversing the wide gulf of Xagua. At length they came to where the sea became suddenly as white as milk, and perfectly turbid, as though flour had been mingled with it. This is caused by fine sand, or calca-

* Humboldt, Essai Pol. sur Cuba, t. ii., p. 25.

reous particles, raised from the bottom at certain depths by the agitation of the waves and currents. It spread great alarm through the ships, which was heightened by their soon finding themselves surrounded by banks and keys, and in shallow water. The further they proceeded, the more perilous became their situation. They were in a narrow channel, where they had no room to turn, and to beat out; where there was no hold for their anchors, and where they were violently tossed about by the winds, and in danger of being stranded. At length they came to a small island, where they found tolerable anchorage. Here they remained for the night in great anxiety; many were for abandoning all further prosecution of the enterprise, thinking that they might esteem themselves fortunate should they be able to return from whence they came. Columbus, however, could not consent to relinquish his voyage, now that he thought himself in the route for a brilliant discovery. The next morning he despatched the smallest caravel to explore this new labyrinth of islands, and to penetrate to the main land in quest of fresh water, of which the ships were in great

need. The caravel returned with a report that the canals and keys of this groupe were as numerous and intricate as those of the Gardens of the Queen: that the main-land was bordered by deep marshes and a muddy coast, where the mangrove trees grew within the water, and so close together, that they formed, as it were, an impenetrable wall: that within, the land appeared fertile and mountainous; and columns of smoke, rising from various parts, gave signs of numerous inhabitants *. Under the guidance of this caravel, Columbus now ventured to penetrate this little archipelago; working his way with great caution, toil, and peril, among the narrow channels which separated the sand-banks and islands, and frequently getting aground. At length he reached a low point of Cuba, to which he gave the name of Point Serafin; within which the coast swept off to the east, forming so deep a bay, that he could not see the land at the bottom. To the north, however, there were mountains afar off, and the intermediate space was clear and open; the islands in sight lying to the

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 128.

south and west; a description which agrees with that of the great bay of Batabano. Columbus now steered for these mountains, with a fair wind and three fathoms of water, and on the following day anchored on the coast near a beautiful grove of palm-trees.

Here, a party was sent on shore for wood and water; and they found two living springs in the midst of the grove. While they were employed in cutting wood, and filling their water-casks, an archer strayed into the forest with his cross-bow in search of game, but soon returned, flying with great terror, and calling loudly for aid upon his comrades. He declared that he had not proceeded far, when he suddenly espied, through an opening glade, a man in a long white dress, so like a friar of the order of St. Mary of Mercy, that at first sight he took him for the chaplain of the admiral. Two others followed, in white tunics reaching to their knees, and the three were of as fair complexions as Europeans. Behind these appeared many more to the number of thirty, armed with clubs and lances. They made no signs of hostility, but remained quiet, the man in the long white dress

alone advancing to accost him; but he was so alarmed at their number, that he had fled instantly to seek the aid of his companions. The party all hurried to the ships. When Columbus heard this story he was greatly rejoiced, for he concluded that these must be the clothed inhabitants of Mangon, of whom he had recently heard, and that he had at length approached the confines of a civilized country, if not within the very borders of the rich province of Mangi. On the following day he despatched a party of armed men in quest of these people clad in white, with orders to penetrate, if necessary, forty miles into the interior, until they met with some of the inhabitants; for he thought the populous and cultivated parts might be distant from the sea, and that there might be towns and cities beyond the wild woods and mountains of the coast. The party penetrated through a belt of thick forests which girdled the shore, and then entered upon a great plain or savannah, covered with rank grass and herbage as tall as ripe corn, and destitute of any road or footpath. Here they were so entangled and fettered, as it were, by matted grass and creeping

vegetation, that it was with the utmost difficulty they penetrated a mile, when they had to abandon the attempt, and return weary and exhausted to the ships.

Another party was sent on the succeeding day to penetrate in a different direction. They had not proceeded far from the coast, when they beheld the foot-prints of some large animal with claws, which some supposed the tracks of a lion, others of a griffin, but which were probably made by the alligators which abound in that vicinity. Dismayed at the sight, they hastened back towards the sea-side. In their way they passed through a forest, with lawns and meadows opening in various parts of it, in which were flocks of cranes, twice the size of those of Europe. Many of the trees and shrubs sent forth those aromatic odours which were continually deceiving them with the hope of finding oriental spices. They saw also abundance of grape-vines, that beautiful feature in the vegetation of the New World. Many of these crept to the summits of the highest trees, overwhelming them with foliage, twisting themselves from branch to branch, and bear-

ing ponderous clusters of juicy grapes. The party returned to the ships equally unsuccessful with their predecessors, and pronounced the country wild and impenetrable, though exceedingly fertile. As a proof of its abundance, they brought great clusters of the wild grapes, which Columbus afterwards transmitted to the sovereigns, together with a specimen of the water of the White Sea through which he had passed.

As no tribe of Indians was ever discovered in Cuba wearing clothing, it is probable that the story of the men in white originated in some error of the archer, who, full of the idea of the mysterious inhabitants of Mangon, may have been startled in the course of his lonely wandering in the forest, by one of those flocks of cranes which it seems abounded in the neighbourhood. These birds, like the flamingos, feed in company, with one stationed at a distance as centinel. When seen through the openings of the woodlands, standing in rows along a smooth savannah, or in a glassy pool of water, their height and erectness give them, at the first glance, the semblance of human figures. Whether the story originated in

error or in falsehood, it made a deep impression on Columbus, who was predisposed to be deceived, and to believe every thing that favoured the illusion of his being in the vicinity of a civilized country. After he had explored the deep bay to the east, and ascertained that it was not an arm of the sea, he continued westward, and proceeding about nine leagues, came to an inhabited shore, where he had communications with several of the natives. They were naked as usual; but that he attributed to their being mere fishermen inhabiting a savage coast; he presumed the civilized regions to lie in the interior. As his Lucayan interpreter did not understand the language, or rather dialect, of this part of Cuba, all the information which he could obtain from the natives was necessarily received through the erroneous medium of signs and gesticulations. Deluded by his own favourite hypothesis, he understood from them that, among certain mountains which he saw far off to the west, there was a powerful king who reigned in great state over many populous provinces; that he wore a white garment which swept

the ground; that he was called a saint *; that he never spoke, but communicated his orders to his subjects by signs, which were implicitly obeyed †. In all this we see the busy imagination of the admiral interpreting every thing into unison with his preconceived ideas. Las Casas assures us that there was no cacique ever known in the island who wore garments, or answered in other respects to this description. This king, with a saintly title, was probably nothing more than a reflected image haunting the mind of Columbus, of that mysterious potentate Prester John, who had long figured in the narrations of all eastern travellers, sometimes as a monarch, sometimes as a priest, the situation of whose empire and court was always a matter of doubt and contradiction, and had recently become again an object of curious inquiry.

The information derived from these people concerning the coast to the westward was entirely vague. They said that it continued for at least

* Que le Llamaban, santo e que traia tunica blanca que le ærastra por el suelo. *Cura de los Palacios*, c. 128.

† Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, lib. ii., c. 14.

twenty days journey, but whether it terminated there they did not know. They appeared but little informed of any thing out of their immediate neighbourhood. Taking an Indian from this place as a guide, Columbus steered for the distant mountains, said to be inhabited by this cacique in white raiment, hoping they might prove the confines of a more civilized country. He had not gone far before he was involved in the usual perplexities of keys, shelves, and sand-banks. The vessels frequently stirred up the sand and slime from the bottom of the sea; at other times they were almost imbedded in narrow channels, where there was no room to tack, and it was necessary to haul them forward by means of the capstern, to their great injury. At one time they came to where the sea was almost covered with tortoises; at another time flights of cormorants and wood pigeons darkened the sun, and one day the whole air was filled with clouds of gaudy butterflies, until dispelled by the evening shower.

When they approached the mountainous regions, they found the coast bordered by drowned lands or morasses, and beset by such thick forests,

that it was impossible to penetrate to the interior. They were several days seeking fresh water, of which they were in great want. At length they found a spring in a grove of palm trees, and near it shells of the pearl oyster, from which Columbus thought there might be a valuable pearl-fishery in the neighbourhood. While thus cut off from all intercourse with the interior by a belt of swamp and forests, the country appeared to be well peopled. Columns of smoke ascended from various parts, which grew more frequent as the vessels advanced, until they rose from every rock and woody height. The Spaniards were at a loss to determine whether these arose from villages and towns, or whether from signal fires, to give notice of the approach of the ships, and to alarm the country; such as were usual on European sea-shores, when an enemy was descried hovering in the vicinity.

For several days Columbus continued exploring this perplexed and lonely coast, whose intricate channels arc seldom visited, even at the present day, excepting by the solitary and lurking bark of the smuggler. As he proceeded, however, he

found that the coast took a general bend to the south-west. This accorded precisely with the descriptions given by Marco Polo of the remote coast of Asia. He now became fully assured that he was on that part of the Asiatic continent which is beyond the boundaries of the Old World as laid down by Ptolemy. Let him but continue his course, he thought, and he must surely arrive to the point where this range of coast terminated in the Aurea Chersonesus of the ancients*.

The ardent imagination of Columbus was always sallying in the advance, and suggesting some splendid track of enterprise. Combining his present conjectures as to his situation with the imperfect lights of geography, he conceived a triumphant route for his return to Spain. Doubling the Aurea Chersonesus, he should emerge into the seas frequented by the ancients, and bordered by the luxurious nations of the East. Stretching across the gulf of the Ganges he might pass by Taprobana, and continuing on to the straits of Babelmandel arrive on the shores of the Red Sea. From thence he might make his way by land to

* The present peninsula of Malacca.

Jerusalem, take shipping at Joppa, and traverse the Mediterranean to Spain. Or should the route from Ethiopia to Jerusalem be deemed too perilous from savage and warlike tribes, or should he not choose to separate from his vessels, he might sail round the whole coast of Africa, pass triumphantly by the Portuguese, in their midway groping along the shores of Guinea, and after having thus circumnavigated the globe, furl his adventurous sails at the Pillars of Hercules, the *ne plus ultra* of the ancient world! Such was the soaring meditation of Columbus, as recorded by one of his intimate associates*; nor is there any thing surprising in his ignorance of the real magnitude of our globe. The mechanical admeasurement of a known part of its circle has rendered its circumference a familiar fact in our day; but in his time it still remained a problem with the most profound philosophers.

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 123. MS.

CHAPTER V.

RETURN OF COLUMBUS ALONG THE SOUTHERN COAST OF CUBA.

[1494.]

The opinion of Columbus, that he was coasting the continent of Asia, and approaching the confines of eastern civilization, was shared by all his fellow voyagers, among whom were several able and experienced navigators. They were far, however, from sharing his enthusiasm. They were to derive no glory from the success of the enterprise, and they shrunk from its increasing difficulties and perils. The ships were strained and crazed by the various injuries they had received, in running frequently aground. Their cables and rigging were worn, their provisions were growing scanty, a great part of the biscuit was spoiled by the sea-water, which oozed in through innumerable leaks. The crews were worn out by incessant labour, and disheartened at the appearance of the sea before them, which continued to exhibit a mere wilder-

ness of islands. They remonstrated, therefore, against persisting any longer in this voyage. They had already followed the coast far enough to satisfy their minds that it was a continent, and though they doubted not that civilized regions lay in the route they were pursuing, yet their provisions might be exhausted, and their vessels disabled, before they could arrive at these countries.

Columbus, as his imagination cooled, was himself aware of the inadequacy of his vessels to the voyage he had contemplated; but he felt it of importance to his fame and to the popularity of his enterprises, to furnish satisfactory proofs that the land he had discovered was a continent. He therefore persisted four days longer in exploring the coast, as it bent to the south-west, until every one declared that there could no longer be a doubt on the subject, for that it was impossible so vast a continuity of land could belong to a mere island. The admiral was determined, however, that the fact should not rest merely on his own assertion, having had recent proofs of a disposition to gainsay his statements, and depreciate his discoveries. He sent round, therefore, a public

notary, Fernand Perez de Luna, to each of the vessels, accompanied by four witnesses, who demanded formally of every person on board, from the captain to the ship-boy, whether he had any doubt that the land before him was a continent, the beginning and end of the Indias, by which any one might return overland to Spain, and by pursuing the coast of which, they could soon arrive among civilized people. If any one entertained a doubt, he was called upon to express it, that it might be removed. On board of the vessels were several experienced navigators and men well versed in the geographical knowledge of the times. They examined their maps and charts, and the reckonings and journals of the voyage, and after deliberating maturely, declared under oath, that they had no doubt upon the subject. They grounded their belief principally upon their having coasted for three hundred and thirty-five leagues*, an extent unheard of as appertaining to an island, while the land continued to

* This calculation evidently includes all the courses of the ships, in their various tacks along the coast. Columbus could hardly have made such an error as to have given this extent to the southern side of the island, even including the inflexions of the coast.

stretch forward interminably, bending towards the south, conformably to the description of the remote coasts of India.

Lest they should subsequently, out of malice or caprice, contradict the opinion thus solemnly avowed, it was proclaimed by the notary, that whoever should offend in such manner, if an officer, should pay a penalty of ten thousand maravedies, if a ship-boy, or person of like rank, he should receive a hundred lashes and have his tongue cut out. A formal statement was afterwards drawn up by the notary, including the depositions and names of every individual; which document still exists *. This singular process took place near that deep bay called by some the bay of Philipina, by others of Cortes. At this very time as has been remarked, a ship-boy from the mast-head might have overlooked the group of islands to the south, and have beheld the open sea beyond. Two or three days farther sail would have carried Columbus round the extremity of Cuba, would have dispelled his illusion, and might have given an entirely different course to

* Navarrete Collec., t. ii.

his subsequent discoveries. In his present conviction he lived and died; believing to his last hour, that Cuba was the extremity of the Asiatic continent.

Relinquishing all further investigation of the coast, he stood to the south-east on the 13th of June, and soon came in sight of a large island, with mountains rising majestically among this labyrinth of little keys. To this he gave the name of Evangelista. It is at present known as the island of Pines, and is celebrated for its excellent mahogany.

Here he anchored and took in a supply of wood and water. He then stood to the south, along the shores of the island, hoping by turning its southern extremity to find an open route eastward for Hispaniola, and intending, on his way, to run along the southern side of Jamaica. He had not proceeded far before he came to what he supposed to be a channel, opening to the south-east between Evangelista and some opposite island. After entering for some distance, however, he found himself enclosed in a deep bay, being the Lagoon of Siguanca, which penetrates far into the island.

Observing dismay painted on the faces of all his crew at finding themselves thus land-locked and almost destitute of provisions, Columbus cheered them with encouraging words, and resolved to extricate himself from this perplexed maze by retracing his course along Cuba. Leaving the Lagoon, therefore, he returned to his last anchoring place, and from thence set sail on the 25th of June, navigating back through the groups of islands between Evangelista and Cuba, and across a tract of the White Sea, which had so much appalled his people. Here he experienced a repetition of the anxieties, the perils, and the toils which had beset him in his advance along the coast. The crews were alarmed by the frequent changes in the colour of the water, sometimes green, sometimes almost black, at other times as white as milk; at one time they fancied themselves surrounded by rocks, at another the sea appeared to be a vast sand-bank. On the 30th of June, the admiral's ship ran aground with such violence as to sustain great injury. Every effort to extricate her by sending out anchors astern was ineffectual, and it was

necessary to drag her over the shoal by the prow. At length they emerged from the clusters of islands called the Jardins and Jardinelles, and came to the open part of the coast of Cuba. Here they once more sailed along the beautiful and fertile province of Ornofay, and were again delighted with the fragrant and honeyed airs which were wafted from the land. Among the mingled odours, the admiral fancied he could perceive that of storax proceeding from the smoke of fires blazing on the shores*.

Here, Columbus sought some convenient harbour where he might procure wood and water, and allow his crews to enjoy repose and the recreations of the land. They were exceedingly enfeebled and emaciated by the toils and privations of the voyage. For nearly two months they had been struggling with perpetual difficulties and dangers, and suffering from a scarcity of provisions. Among these uninhabited keys and drowned shores, their supplies from the natives had been precarious and

* Humboldt (in his Essai Polit. t. ii. p. 24.) speaks of the delicious fragrance of flowers and honey which exhales from this same coast, and which is perceptible to a considerable distance at sea.

at wide intervals; nor could the fresh provisions thus furnished last above a day, from the heat and humidity of the climate. It was the same case with any fish they might chance to catch, so that they had to depend almost entirely upon their daily allowance of ships' provisions, which was reduced to a pound of mouldy bread, and a small portion of wine. With joy, therefore, they anchored on the 7th of July in the mouth of a fine river, in this genial and abundant region. The cacique of the neighbourhood, who reigned over an extensive territory, received the admiral with demonstrations of mingled joy and reverence, and his subjects came laden with whatever their country afforded, utias, birds of various kinds, particularly large pigeons, cassava bread, and fruits of a rich and aromatic flavour.

It was a custom with Columbus in all remarkable places which he visited, to erect crosses in conspicuous situations, to denote the discovery of the country, and its subjugation to the true faith. He ordered a large cross of wood, therefore, to be elevated on the bank of this river. This was done on a Sunday morning with great ceremony, and

the celebration of a solemn mass. When Columbus disembarked for this purpose, he was met upon the shore by the cacique, and his principal favourite, a venerable Indian, fourscore years of age, of grave and dignified deportment. The old man brought a string of a certain kind of beads, to which the Indians attached a mystic value, and a calabash of a delicate kind of fruit; these he presented to the admiral in token of amity. He and the cacique then each took him by the hand and proceeded with him to the grove, where preparations had been made for the celebration of the mass: a multitude of the natives followed. While mass was preparing in this natural temple, the Indians looked on with awe and reverence, perceiving from the tones and gesticulations of the priest, the lighted tapers, the smoking incense, and the devotion of the Spaniards, that it must be a ceremony of a sacred and mysterious nature. When the service was ended, the old man of fourscore, who had contemplated it with profound attention, approached Columbus, and made him an oration in the Indian manner.

"This which thou hast been doing," said he,

"is well, for it appears to be thy manner of giving thanks to God. I am told that thou hast lately come to these lands with a mighty force, and hast subdued many countries, spreading great fear among the people; but be not, therefore, vainglorious. Know that, according to our belief, the souls of men have two journeys to perform after they have departed from the body. One to a place, dismal, and foul, and covered with darkness, prepared for those who have been unjust and cruel to their fellow men; the other pleasant and full of delight, for such who have promoted peace on earth. If, then, thou art mortal and dost expect to die, and dost believe that each one shall be rewarded according to his deeds, beware that thou wrongfully hurt no man, nor do harm to those who have done no harm to thee *." This speech was explained to the admiral by his Lucayan interpreter, Diego Colon. Being a man of sincere piety and tender feelings, he was greatly moved by the simple eloquence of this untutored savage. He told him in reply that he rejoiced to hear his

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. xi., c. 14. Hist. del. Almirante, c. 57. P. Martyr, decad. 1, lib. iii. Cura de los Palacios, cap. 130.

doctrine respecting the future state of the soul, having supposed that no belief of the kind existed among the inhabitants of these countries. That he had been sent among them by his sovereigns, to teach them the true religion; to protect them from harm and injury; and especially to subdue and punish their enemies and persecutors, the Cannibals. That, therefore, all innocent and peaceable men might look up to him with confidence, as an assured friend and protector.

The old man was overjoyed at these words, but was equally astonished to learn that the admiral, whom he considered so great and powerful, was yet but a subject. His wonder increased when the interpreter told him of the riches, and splendour, and power of the Spanish monarchs, and of the wonderful things that he had beheld on his visit to Spain. Finding himself listened to with eager curiosity by the whole multitude, the interpreter went on to describe the objects which had most struck his mind in the country of the white men. The splendid cities, the vast churches, the troops of horsemen, the great animals of various kinds, the pompous festivals and tournaments of

the court, the glittering armies, and, above all, the bull-fights. The Indians all listened in mute amazement, but the old man was particularly excited. He was of a curious and wandering disposition, and had been a great voyager, having, according to his account, visited Jamaica, and Hispaniola, and the remote parts of Cuba *. A sudden desire now seized him to behold the glorious country thus described, and, old as he was, he offered to embark with the admiral. His wife and children, however, beset him with such lamentations and remonstrances, that he was obliged to abandon the intention, though he did it with great reluctance, asking repeatedly if the land they spoke of were not heaven, for it seemed to him impossible that earth could produce such wonderful beings †.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 57.

† Peter Martyr, decad. 1, l. iii.

CHAPTER VI.

COASTING VOYAGE ALONG THE SOUTH SIDE OF JAMAICA.

[1494.]

Columbus remained for several days at anchor in the river, to which, from the solemn Mass performed on its banks, he gave the name of Rio de la Misa. At length, on the 16th of July, he took leave of the friendly cacique and his ancient counsellor, who beheld his departure with sorrowful countenances. He took one young Indian with him from this place, whom he afterwards sent to the Spanish sovereigns. Leaving to the left the great cluster of islands which he had named the Queen's Gardens, he steered south for the broad open sea and deep blue water, until having a free navigation he could stand eastward for Hispaniola. He had scarcely got clear of the islands, however, when he was assailed by furious gusts of wind and rain, which for two days pelted his crazy vessels, and harassed his enfeebled

crews. At length, as he approached Cape Cruz, a violent squall struck the ships, and nearly threw them on their beam ends. Fortunately they were able to take in sail immediately, and, letting go their largest anchors, they rode out the transient gale. The admiral's ship was so strained by the injuries received among the islands, that she leaked at every seam, and the utmost exertions of the weary crew could not prevent the water from gaining on her. At length they were enabled to reach Cape Cruz, where they anchored on the 18th of July, and remained three days, receiving the same hospitable succour from the natives which they had experienced on their former visit. The wind continuing contrary for the return to Hispaniola, Columbus, on the 22d of July, stood across for Jamaica, to complete the circumnavigation of that island. For nearly a month he continued beating to the eastward along its southern coast, experiencing just such variable winds and evening showers as had prevailed along the shores of Cuba. Every evening he was obliged to anchor under the land, often at nearly the same place from whence he had sailed in the morning.

The natives no longer manifested hostility, but followed the ships in their canoes, bringing supplies of provisions. Columbus was so much delighted with the verdure, freshness, and fertility of this noble island, that, had the state of his vessels and crews permitted, he would gladly have remained to explore the interior. He spoke with admiration of its frequent and excellent harbours, but was particularly pleased with a great bay, containing seven islands, and surrounded by numerous villages *. Anchoring here one evening, he was visited by a cacique who resided in a large village, situated on an eminence of the loftiest and most fertile of the islands. He came attended by a numerous train, bearing various refreshments. This chieftain manifested great curiosity in his inquiries concerning the Spaniards, their ships, and the region from whence they came. The admiral made his customary reply, setting forth the great power and the benign intentions of the Spanish sovereigns. The Lucayan interpreter again enlarged upon the wonders he had beheld in Spain,

* From the description, this must be the great bay east of Polland Point, at the bottom of which is Old Harbour.

the prowess of the Spaniards, the countries they had visited and subjugated, and, above all, their having made descents on the islands of the Caribs, routed their formidable inhabitants, and carried several of them into captivity. To these accounts the cacique and his followers remained listening in profound attention until the night was advanced.

The next morning the ships were under weigh and standing along the coast with a light wind and easy sail, when they beheld three canoes issuing from among the islands of the bay. They approached in regular order; one, which was very large and handsomely carved and painted, was in the centre, a little in advance of the two others, which appeared to attend and guard it. In this was seated the cacique and his family, consisting of his wife, two daughters, two sons, and five brothers. One of the daughters was eighteen years of age, beautiful in form and countenance; her sister was somewhat younger; both were naked, according to the custom of these islands, but were of modest demeanour. In the prow of the canoe stood the standard-bearer of the cacique, clad in a kind of mantle of variegated feathers,

with a tuft of gay plumes on his head, and bearing in his hand a fluttering white banner. Two Indians with caps or helmets of feathers of uniform shape and colour, and their faces painted in a similar manner, beat upon tabors ; two others, with hats curiously wrought of green feathers, held trumpets of a fine black wood, ingeniously carved ; and there were six others, in large hats and white feathers, who appeared to be guests to the cacique. This gallant little armada having arrived alongside of the admiral's ship, the cacique entered on board with all his train. He appeared in his full regalia. Around his head was a band of small stones of various colours, but principally green, symmetrically arranged, with large white stones at intervals, and connected in front by a large jewel of gold. Two plates of gold were suspended to his ears by rings of small green stones. To a necklace of white beads, of a kind deemed precious by them, was suspended a large plate, in the form of a fleur-de-lys, of guanin, an inferior species of gold ; and a girdle of variegated stones, similar to those round his head, completed his regal decorations. His wife was adorned in a

similar manner, having also a very small apron of cotton, and bands of the same round her arms and legs. The daughters were without ornaments, excepting the eldest and handsomest, who had a girdle of small stones, from which was suspended a tablet, the size of an ivy leaf, composed of various coloured stones, embroidered on net work of cotton.

When the cacique entered on board the ship, he distributed presents of the productions of his island among the officers and men. The admiral was at this time in his cabin, engaged in his morning devotions. When he appeared on deck, the chieftain hastened to meet him with an animated countenance. "My friend," said he, "I have determined to leave my country, and to accompany thee. I have heard from these Indians who are with thee, of the irresistible power of thy sovereigns, and of the many nations thou hast subdued in their name. Whoever refuses obedience to thee is sure to suffer. Thou hast destroyed the canoes and dwellings of the Caribs, slaying their warriors, and carrying into captivity their wives and children. All the islands are in

dread of thee; for who can withstand thee now that thou knowest the secrets of the land, and the weakness of the people. Rather, therefore, than thou shouldst take away my dominions, I will embark with all my household in thy ships, and will go to do homage to thy king and queen, and to behold their marvellous country, of which thy Indians relate such wonders." When this speech was explained to Columbus, and he beheld the wife, the sons and daughters of the cacique, and thought upon the snares to which their ignorance and simplicity would be exposed, he was touched with compassion, and determined not to take them from their native land. He replied to the cacique, therefore, that he received him under his protection as a vassal of his sovereigns, but having many lands yet to visit before he returned to his country, he would at some future time fulfil his desire. Then taking leave with many expressions of amity, the cacique, with his wife and daughters, and all his retinue, re-embarked in the canoes, returning reluctantly to their island, and the ships continued on their course *.

* Hitherto, in narrating this voyage of Columbus along the coast of Cuba,

I have been guided principally by the manuscript history of the curate of Los Palacios. His account is the most clear and satisfactory as to names, dates, and routes, and contains many characteristic particulars not inserted in any other history. His sources of information were of the highest kind. Columbus was his guest after his return to Spain in 1496, and left with him manuscripts, journals, and memorandums; from these he made extracts, collating them with the letters of the Doctor Chanca, and other persons of note who had accompanied the admiral.

I have examined two copies of the MS. of the curate de los Palacios, both in the possession of Mr. O'Rich. One written in an ancient hand-writing, in the early part of the sixteenth century, varies from the other, but only in a few trivial particulars.

CHAPTER VII.

VOYAGE ALONG THE SOUTH SIDE OF HISPANIOLA, AND RETURN TO ISABELLA.

[1494.]

On the 19th of August Columbus lost sight of the eastern extremity of Jamaica, to which he gave the name of Cape Farol, at present called Point Morant. Steering eastward, he beheld, on the following day, that long peninsula of Hispaniola known by the name of Cape Tiburon, but to which he gave the name of Cape San Miguel. He was not aware that it was a part of the island of Hayti, until, coasting along its southern side, a cacique came off on the 23rd of August, and called him by his title, addressing him with several words of Castilian. The sound of these words spread joy through the ship, and the weary seamen heard with delight that they were on the southern coast of Hispaniola. They had still, however, many toilsome days before them. The weather was boisterous, the wind contrary and

capricious, and the ships were separated from each other. About the end of August, Columbus anchored at a small island, or rather rock, which rises singly out of the sea opposite to a long cape, stretching southward from the centre of the island, to which he gave the name of Cape Beata. The rock at which he anchored had the appearance, at a distance, of a tall ship under sail, from which circumstance the admiral called it, "Alto Velo." Several seamen were ordered to climb to the top of the island, which commanded a great extent of ocean, and to look out for the other ships. Nothing of them was to be seen. On their return, the sailors killed eight sea-wolves, which were sleeping on the sands; they also knocked down many pigeons and other birds with sticks, and took others with the hand; for in this unfrequented island, the animals seemed to have none of that wildness and timidity produced by the hostility of man.

Being rejoined by the two caravels, he continued along the coast, passing the beautiful country watered by the branches of the Neyva, where a fertile plain, covered with villages and

groves, extended into the interior. After proceeding some distance farther to the east, the admiral learnt from the natives who came off to the ships, that several Spaniards from the settlement had penetrated to their province. From all that he could learn from these people, every thing appeared to be going on well in the island. Encouraged by the tranquillity of the interior, he landed nine men here, with orders to traverse the island, and give tidings of his safe arrival on the coast.

Continuing to the eastward, he sent a boat on shore for water near a large village in a plain. The inhabitants issued forth with bows and arrows to give battle, while others were provided with cords to bind prisoners. These were the natives of Higuey, the eastern province of Hispaniola. They were the most warlike people of the island, having been inured to arms from the frequent descent of the Caribs. They were said also to make use of poisoned arrows. In the present instance, their hostility was but in appearance. When the crew landed, they threw by their weapons, and brought various articles of food, and asked for the admiral, whose fame had spread

throughout the island, and in whose justice and magnanimity all the natives appeared to repose confidence. After leaving this place, the weather, which had been so long variable and adverse, began to assume a threatening appearance. A huge fish, as large as a moderate-sized whale, raised itself out of the water one day, having a shell on its neck like that of a tortoise, two great fins like wings, and a tail like that of a tunny fish. At sight of this fish, and at the indications of the clouds and sky, Columbus anticipated an approaching storm, and sought for some secure harbour *. He found a channel opening between Hispaniola and a small island, called by the Indians Adamaney, but to which he gave the name of Saona; here he took refuge, anchoring beside a key or islet in the middle of the channel. On the night of his arrival there was an eclipse of the moon, and taking an observation, he found the difference of longitude between Saona and Cadiz to be five hours and twenty-three minutes †. This is upwards

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., c. 15. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 59.

† Herrera, ubi sup. Hist. Almirante, ubi sup.

of eighteen degrees more than the true longitude; an error which must have resulted from the incorrectness of his table of eclipses *.

For eight days the admiral's ship remained weather-bound in this channel, during which time he suffered great anxiety for the fate of the other vessels, which had not been able to enter, but remained at sea, exposed to the violence of the storm. They escaped, however, uninjured, and once more rejoined him when the weather had moderated. Leaving the channel of Saona, they reached, on the 24th of September, the eastern extremity of Hispaniola, to which Columbus gave the name of Cape San Rafael, at present known as Cape Engano. From hence they stood to the south-east, touching at the island of Mona, or, as the Indians called it, Amona, situated between Porto Rico and Hispaniola. It was the intention of Columbus, notwithstanding the condition of the ships, to continue farther eastward, and to complete the discovery of the Caribbee Islands, but his physical strength did not correspond to the efforts of

* Five hours, twenty-five minutes, are equal to 80° 45′; whereas the true longitude of Saona is 62° 20′ west of Cadiz.

his lofty spirit *. The extraordinary fatigues which he had suffered, both in mind and body, during an anxious and harassing voyage of five months, had secretly preyed upon his frame. He had shared in all the hardships and privations of the commonest seaman. He had put himself upon the same scanty allowance, and exposed himself to the same buffetings of wind and weather. But he had other cares and trials from which his people were exempt. When the sailor, worn out with the labours of his watch, slept soundly amidst the howling of the storm, the anxious commander maintained his painful vigil, through long sleepless nights, amidst the pelting of the tempest, and the drenching surges of the sea. The safety of his ships depended upon his watchfulness; but above all, he felt that a jealous nation, and an expecting world, were anxiously awaiting the result of his enterprise. During a great part of the present voyage, he had been excited by the constant hope of soon arriving at the known parts of India, and by the anticipation of a triumphant return to Spain, through the re-

* Munoz. Hist. N. Mundo, l. v., sec. 22.

gions of the East, after circumnavigating the globe. When disappointed in this expectation, he was yet stimulated by a conflict with incessant hardships and perils, as he made his way back against contrary winds and storms. The moment he was relieved from all solicitude, and beheld himself in a known and tranquil sea, the excitement suddenly ceased, and mind and body sunk exhausted by almost superhuman exertions. The very day on which he sailed from Mona, he was struck with a sudden malady, which deprived him of memory, of sight, and all his faculties. He fell into a deep lethargy, resembling death itself. His crew, alarmed at this profound torpor, feared that death was really at hand. They abandoned, therefore, all further prosecution of the voyage; and spreading their sails to the east wind so prevalent in those seas, they bore Columbus back, in a state of complete insensibility, to the harbour of Isabella.

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER I.

ARRIVAL OF THE ADMIRAL AT ISABELLA. CHARACTER OF BARTHOLOMEW COLUMBUS.

[September 4, 1494.]

THE sight of the little squadron of Columbus standing once more into the harbour, was hailed with joy by such of the inhabitants of Isabella as remained faithful to him. The long time that had elapsed since his departure on this adventurous voyage, without any tidings arriving from him, had given rise to the most serious apprehensions for his safety, and it began to be feared that he had fallen a victim to his enterprising spirit in some remote part of these unknown seas. A joyful and heartfelt surprise awaited the admiral on his arrival, in finding at his bed-side his brother Bartholomew, the companion of his youth, his confidential coadjutor, and, in a manner, his second self, from whom he had been separated for several

years. It will be recollected that about the time of the admiral's departure from Portugal, he had commissioned Bartholomew to repair to England, and propose his project of discovery to King Henry VII. Of this application to the English court no precise particulars are known. Fernando Columbus states that his uncle, in the course of his voyage, was captured and plundered by a corsair, and reduced to such poverty, that he had for a long time to struggle for a mere subsistence by making sea-charts; so that some years elapsed before he made his application to the English monarch. Las Casas thinks that he did not immediately proceed to England, having found a memorandum in his hand-writing, by which it would appear that he accompanied Bartholomew Diaz in 1486, in his voyage along the coast of Africa, in the service of the King of Portugal, in the course of which was discovered the Cape of Good Hope *.

* The memorandum cited by Las Casas (Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 7.) is curious, though not conclusive. He says that he found it in an old book belonging to Christopher Columbus, containing the works of Pedro de Aliaco, a learned astronomer and geographer. It was written in the margin of a treatise on the form of the globe, in the hand-writing of Bartholomew Columbus, which was well known to Las Casas, as he had many letters in his

It is but justice to the memory of Henry VII. to say, that when the proposition was eventually made to him, it met with a more ready attention than from any other sovereign. An agreement was actually made with Bartholomew for the prosecution of the enterprise, and the latter departed for Spain in search of his brother. On reaching Paris, he first received the joyful intelligence that the discovery was already made, that his brother had returned to Spain in triumph, and was actually at the Spanish court, honoured by the sove-

possession. The memorandum was in a barbarous mixture of Latin and Spanish, and to the following effect:—

"In the year 1488, in December, arrived at Lisbon, Bartholomew Diaz, captain of three caravels, which the King of Portugal sent to discover Guinea, and brought accounts that he had discovered six hundred leagues of territory, 450 to the south, and 150 north, to a cape named by him the Cape of Good Hope; and that by the astrolabe he found the Cape forty-five degrees beyond the equinoctial line. This Cape was 3,100 leagues distant from Lisbon; the which the said captain says he set down, league by league, in a chart of navigation presented to the King of Portugal, in all which," adds the writer, "I was present." Las Casas expresses a doubt whether Bartholomew wrote this note for himself, or on the part of his brother, but infers that one, or both, were in this expedition. The inference may be correct with respect to Bartholomew, but Christopher at the time specified was at the Spanish court.

Las Casas accounts for a difference in date between the foregoing memorandum and the chronicles of the voyage; the former making the return of Diaz in the year 88, the latter, 87. This, he observes, might be because some begin to count the year after Christmas, others at the 1st of January; and the expedition sailed about the end of August, 86, and returned in December, 87, after an absence of seventeen months.

reigns, caressed by the nobility, and idolized by the people.

The glory of Columbus already shed its rays upon his family, and Bartholomew found himself immediately a person of importance. He was noticed by the French monarch, Charles VIII., who, understanding that he was low in purse, furnished him with one hundred crowns to defray the expenses of his journey to Spain. He reached Seville just as his brother had departed on his second voyage. Bartholomew immediately repaired to the court, then at Valladolid, taking with him his two nephews Diego and Fernando, who were to serve in quality of pages to Prince Juan *. He was received with distinguished favour by the sovereigns, who, finding him to be an able and accomplished navigator, gave him the command of three ships freighted with supplies for the colony, and sent him to aid his brother in his enterprises. He had again arrived too late; reaching Isabella just after the departure of the admiral for the coast of Cuba.

The sight of this brother was an inexpressible

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 60.

relief to Columbus, overwhelmed as he was by cares, and surrounded by strangers. His chief dependence for sympathy and assistance hitherto had been on his brother Don Diego, but his mild and peaceable disposition rendered him little capable of managing the concerns of a factious colony. Bartholomew was of a different and more efficient character; he was prompt, active, decided, and of a fearless spirit; whatever he determined he carried into instant execution, without regard to difficulty and danger. His person corresponded to his mind; it was tall, muscular, vigorous, and commanding. He had an air of great authority, but somewhat stern, wanting that sweetness and benignity which tempered the authoritative demeanour of the admiral. Indeed there was a certain asperity in his temper, and a dryness and abruptness in his manners, which made him many enemies; yet notwithstanding these external defects, he was of a generous disposition, free from all arrogance or malevolence, and as placable as he was brave.

He was a thorough seaman, understanding both the theory and practice of his profession, having

been formed in a great measure under the eye of the admiral, and being but little inferior to him in science. He was superior to him in the exercise of the pen, according to Las Casas, who had letters and manuscripts of both in his possession. He was acquainted with Latin, but does not appear to have been highly educated, his knowledge, like that of his brother, being chiefly derived from a long course of varied experience and attentive observation. Equally vigorous and penetrating in intellect with the admiral, but less enthusiastic in spirit and soaring in imagination, and with less simplicity of heart, he surpassed him in the subtle and adroit management of business, was more attentive to his interests, and had more of that worldly wisdom which is so important in the ordinary concerns of life. His genius might never have excited him to the sublime speculation which ended in the discovery of a world, but his practical sagacity was calculated to turn that discovery to advantage. Such is the description of Bartholomew Columbus, as furnished by the venerable Las Casas from personal observation *, and

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 29.

it will be found to accord with his actions throughout the remaining history of the admiral, in the events of which he takes a conspicuous part.

Anxious to relieve himself from the pressure of public business, which weighed heavily upon him during his present malady, Columbus immediately invested his brother Bartholomew with the title and authority of Adelantado, an office equivalent to that of lieutenant-governor. He considered himself entitled to do so from the articles of his arrangement with the sovereigns, but it was looked upon by king Ferdinand as an undue assumption of power, and gave great offence to that jealous monarch, who was exceedingly tenacious of the prerogatives of the crown, and considered dignities of this rank and importance as only to be conferred by royal mandate *. Columbus, however, was not actuated in this appointment by a mere desire to aggrandize his family. He felt the importance of his brother's assistance in the present critical state of the colony, but that this co-operation would be inefficient unless it bore the stamp of high official authority. In fact, during the few months that he had been

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 101

absent, the whole island had become a scene of discord and violence, in consequence of the neglect, or rather the flagrant violation, of those rules which he had prescribed for the maintenance of its tranquillity. A brief retrospect of the recent affairs of the colony is here necessary to explain their present confusion. It will exhibit one of the many instances in which Columbus was doomed to reap the fruits of the evil seed which had been sown by his adversaries.

CHAPTER II.

MISCONDUCT OF DON PEDRO MARGARITE, AND HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE ISLAND.

[1494.]

It will be recollected, that, before departing on his voyage, Columbus had given the command of the army to Don Pedro Margarite, with orders to make a military tour of the island, and, while he awed the natives by a display of military force, to conciliate their good will by the most equitable and amicable treatment.

The island was at this time divided into five domains, each governed by a sovereign cacique, of absolute and hereditary power, to whom a great number of inferior caciques yielded tributary allegiance. The first or most important domain comprised the middle part of the royal Vega. It was a rich, lovely country, partly cultivated after the imperfect manner of the natives, partly covered with noble forests, studded with Indian towns, and watered by numerous rivers, many of which, roll-

ing down from the mountains of Cibao, on its western frontier, had gold dust mingled with their sands. The name of the cacique was Guarionex, whose ancestors had long ruled over the province.

The second, called Marien, was under the sway of Guacanagari, on whose coast Columbus had been wrecked in his first voyage. It was a large and fertile territory, extending along the northern coast from Cape St. Nicholas at the western extremity of the island, to the great river Yagui, afterwards called Monte Christi, and including the northern part of the royal Vega, since called the plain of Cape François.

The third bore the name of Maguana, and was under the dominion of the Carib cacique Caonabo, the most fierce and puissant of the savage chieftians, and the inveterate enemy of the white men. In this domain was included the gold mines of Cibao.

The fourth took its name from Xaragua, a large lake, and was the most populous and extensive of all. It comprised the whole western coast, including the long promontory of Cape Tiburon, and extended for a considerable distance along the

southern side of the island. The inhabitants were finely formed, had a noble air, a more agreeable elocution, and more soft and graceful manners than the natives of the other parts of the island. The sovereign was named Behechio; his sister Anacaona, celebrated throughout the island for her beauty, was the favourite wife of the neighbouring cacique Caonabo.

The fifth domain was Higuey, and occupied the whole eastern part of the island, being bounded on the north by the river Yagui, and on the south by the Ozema. The inhabitants were the most active and warlike people of the island, having learnt the use of the bow and arrow from the Caribs, who made frequent descents upon their coasts; they were said also to make use of poisoned weapons. Their bravery, however, was but comparative, and was found eventually of little avail against the terror of European arms. They were governed by a cacique named Cotubanama*.

Such were the five territorial divisions of the island at the time of its discovery. The amount

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, l. i., p. 69.

of its population has never been clearly ascertained; some have stated it at a million of souls, though this is considered an exaggeration. It must, however, have been very numerous, and sufficient, in case of any general hostility, to endanger the safety of a handful of Europeans. Columbus trusted for safety partly to the awe inspired by the weapons and horses of the Spaniards, and the idea of their superhuman nature, but chiefly to the measures he had taken to conciliate the good will of the Indians by gentle and beneficent treatment.

Margarite set forth on his expedition with the greater part of the forces, leaving Alonzo de Ojeda in command of the fortress of St. Thomas. Instead, however, of commencing by exploring the rough mountains of Cibao, as he had been commanded, he descended into the rich plains of the Vega. Here he lingered among the populous and hospitable Indian villages, forgetful of the object of his command, and of the instructions left him by the admiral. A commander who lapses from duty himself, and yields to the incitements of his passions, is but little calculated to

enforce discipline on others. The sensual indulgences of Margarite were imitated by his followers, and his army soon became little better than a crew of riotous marauders. The Indians, for a time, supplied them with provisions with their wonted hospitality, but the scanty stores of those abstemious yet improvident people were soon exhausted by the Spaniards; one of whom they declared would consume more in a day than would support an Indian for a month. If provisions were withheld, or scantily furnished, they were taken with violence; nor was any compensation given to the natives, nor means taken to sooth their irritation. The avidity for gold also led to a thousand acts of injustice and oppression; but above all the Spaniards outraged the dearest feelings of the natives, by their licentious conduct with respect to the women. In fact, instead of guests, they soon assumed the tone of imperious masters; instead of enlightened benefactors, they became sordid and sensual oppressors.

Tidings of these excesses, and of the disgust and impatience that they were awakening among the natives, soon reached Don Diego Columbus.

With the concurrence of the council, he wrote to Margarite reprehending his conduct, and requesting him to proceed on the military tour, according to the commands of the admiral. The pride of Margarite took fire at this reproof; he considered, or rather pretended to consider himself independent in his command, and above all responsibility to the council for his conduct. Being of an ancient family, also, and a favourite of the king, he affected to look down with contempt upon the newly-coined nobility of Diego Columbus. His letters, in reply to the orders of the president and council, were couched in a tone either of haughty contumely or of military defiance. He continued with his followers, quartered in the Vega, persisting in a course of outrages and oppressions fatal to the tranquillity of the island.

He was supported in his arrogant defiance of authority by the cavaliers and adventurers of noble birth who were in the colony, and who had been deeply wounded in the proud punctilio so jealously guarded by a Spaniard. They could not forget nor forgive the stern equity exercised by the admiral in a time of emergency,

in making them submit to the privations and share the labours of the vulgar. Still less could they brook the authority of his brother Diego, destitute of his high personal claims to distinction. They formed, therefore, a kind of aristocratical faction in the colony; affecting to consider Columbus and his family as mere mercenary and upstart foreigners, building up their own fortunes at the expense of the toils and sufferings of the community, and the degradation of Spanish hidalgos and cavaliers.

In addition to these partisans, Margarite had a powerful ally in his fellow countryman, Friar Boyle, the head of the religious fraternity, one of the members of the council, and apostolical vicar for the New World. It is not easy to ascertain the original cause of the hostility of this holy friar to the admiral, who was never wanting in respect to the clergy. Various altercations, however, had taken place between them. Some say that the friar interfered in respect to the strict measures deemed necessary by the admiral for the security of the colony; others that he resented the fancied indignity offered to himself and his house-

hold in putting them on the same short allowance with the common people. He appears, however, to have been generally disappointed and disgusted with the sphere of action afforded by the colony, and to have looked back with regret to the Old World. He had none of that enthusiastic zeal, and persevering self-devotion, which induced so many of the Spanish missionaries to brave all the hardships and privations of the New World, in the hope of converting its pagan inhabitants.

Encouraged and fortified by such powerful partisans, Margarite really began to consider himself above the temporary authorities of the island. Whenever he came to Isabella, he took no notice of Don Diego Columbus, nor paid any respect to the council, but acted as if he had paramount command. He formed a cabal of most of those who where disaffected to Columbus, and discontented with their abode in the colony. Among these the leading agitator was Friar Boyle. It was concerted among them to take possession of the ships which had brought out Don Bartholomew Columbus, and to return in them to Spain. Both Margarite and Boyle possessed the favour of

the king, and they deemed it would be an easy matter to justify their abandonment of their military and religious commands by a pretended zeal for the public good; hurrying home to represent the disastrous state of the country, through the tyranny and oppression of its rulers. Some have ascribed the abrupt departure of Margarite to his fear of a severe military investigation of his conduct on the return of the admiral; others to his having contracted a malady in the course of his licentious amours, which was unknown at that time to Europeans, and which he attributed to the climate, and hoped to cure by medical assistance in Spain. Whatever may have been the cause, his measures were taken with great precipitancy, without any consultation of the proper authorities, or any regard to the consequences of his departure. Accompanied by a band of malcontents, he and Friar Boyle took possession of some ships in the harbour and set sail for Spain; the first general and apostle of the New World thus setting the flagrant example of unauthorized abandonment of their posts.

CHAPTER III.

TROUBLES WITH THE NATIVES. ALONZO DE OJEDA BESIEGED BY CAONABO.

[1494.]

The departure of Pedro Margarite left the army without a head, and put an end to what little restraint or discipline remained. There is no rabble so licentious as soldiery left to their own direction in a defenceless country. They now roved about in bands, or singly, according to their caprice, scattering themselves among the Indian villages, and indulging in all kinds of excesses, either as prompted by avarice or sensuality. The natives, indignant at having their hospitality thus requited, refused any longer to furnish them with food. In a little while the Spaniards began to experience the pressure of hunger, and seized upon provisions wherever they could be found, accompanying these seizures with acts of wanton violence. At length by a series of flagrant outrages, the gentle and pacific nature of this people

was roused to resentment, and from confiding and hospitable hosts, they were converted into vindictive enemies. All the precautions enjoined by Columbus having been neglected, the evils he had apprehended came to pass. Though the Indians, naturally timid, dared not contend with the Spaniards while they kept up any combined and disciplined force, yet they took sanguinary vengeance on them whenever they met with small parties or scattered individuals, roving about in quest of food. Encouraged by these petty triumphs, and the impunity that seemed to attend them, their hostilities grew more and more alarming. Guatiguana, cacique of a large town on the banks of the Grand River, in the dominions of Guarionax, sovereign of the Vega, put to death ten Spaniards, who had quartered themselves in his town, and humiliated the natives by their debaucheries. He followed up this massacre by setting fire to a house in which forty sick Spaniards were lodged*. Flushed by this success, he threatened to attack a small fortress called Magdalena, which had recently been built in his neighbourhood in the

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., c. 16.

Vega, so that the commander, Luis de Arriaga, having but a feeble garrison, was obliged to remain shut up within its walls until relief should arrive from Isabella.

The most formidable enemy of the Spaniards, however, was Caonabo, the Carib cacique of Maguano; the same who had surprised and massacred the garrison of the fortress at La Navidad. He had natural talents for war, and intelligence superior to the ordinary range of savage intellect. He had a proud and daring spirit to urge him on, three valiant brothers to assist him, and a numerous tribe at his command*. He had always felt jealous of the intrusion of the white men into the island; but when he beheld the fortress of St. Thomas erected in the very centre of his dominions, he was roused to indignation. As long as the army lay within call in the Vega, he was deterred from any attack; but when, on the departure of Margarite, the army became dismembered and dispersed, the time for striking a signal blow seemed arrived. The fortress remained isolated, with a garrison of only fifty men. By a

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., c. 16.

sudden and secret movement, he might overwhelm it with his forces, and repeat the horrors which he had wreaked upon La Navidad.

The wily cacique, however, had a different kind of enemy to deal with in the commander of St. Thomas. Alonzo de Ojeda had been schooled in Moorish warfare. He was versed in all kinds of feints, stratagems, lurking ambuscades, and wild assaults. No man was more fitted, therefore, to cope with Indian warriors. He had a vehement and headlong courage, arising partly from the natural heat and violence of his disposition, and, in a great measure, from religious superstition. He had been engaged in wars with Moors and Indians, in public battles and private combats, in fights, feuds, and encounters of all kinds, to which he had been prompted by a rash and fiery spirit, and a love of adventure; yet he had never been wounded, or harmed. He began to doubt whether any weapon had power to harm him, and to consider himself under the special protection of the holy Virgin. As a kind of religious talisman, he had a small Flemish painting of the Virgin, which had been given him by

his patron, Fonseca, bishop of Badajoz. This he constantly carried with him, in city, camp, or field, making it the object of his frequent orisons and invocations. In garrison or encampment, it was suspended in his chamber or his tent; in his rough expeditions in the wilderness, he carried it in his knapsack, and whenever leisure permitted, would take it out, fix it against a tree, and address his prayers to this military patroness*. In a word, he swore by the Virgin, he invoked the Virgin whether in brawl or battle, and under the favour of the Virgin, he was ready for any enterprise or adventure. Such was this Alonzo de Ojeda, bigotted in his devotion, reckless in his life, fearless in his spirit, like many of the roving Spanish cavaliers of those days. Though diminutive in size, he was a prodigy of strength and prowess; and the chroniclers of the early discoveries relate marvels of his valour and exploits.

Having reconnoitred the fortress, Caonabo assembled ten thousand warriors, armed with war clubs, bows and arrows, and lances hardened in

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. viii., c. 4. Pizarro Varones Illustres, cap. 8.

the fire; and making his way secretly through the forests, came suddenly in the neighbourhood, expecting to surprise the garrison in a state of careless security. He found Ojeda's forces, however, drawn up warily within his tower, which, being built upon an almost insulated height, with a river nearly surrounding it, and the remaining space traversed by a deep ditch, set at defiance an attack by naked warriors.

Foiled in his attempt, Caonabo now hoped to reduce it by famine. For this purpose, he spread his army through the adjacent forests; and waylaid every pass, so as to intercept any supplies brought by the natives, and to cut off any foraging party from the fortress. This siege, or investment, lasted for thirty days *, during which time the garrison was reduced to great distress. There is a traditional anecdote, which Oviedo relates of Pedro Margarite, the former commander of this fortress, but which may with more probability be ascribed to Alonzo de Ojeda, as having occurred during this siege. At a time when the garrison was sore pressed by famine, an Indian

* P. Martyr, decad. 1, lib. iv.

gained access to the fort, bringing a couple of wood-pigeons for the table of the commander. The latter was in an apartment of the tower surrounded by several of his officers. Seeing them regard the birds with the wistful eyes of famishing men, "It is a pity," said he, "that here is not enough to give us all a meal; I cannot consent to feast while the rest of you are starving," so saying, he turned loose the pigeons from a window of the tower.

During the siege, Ojeda displayed the greatest activity of spirit and fertility of resource. He baffled all the arts of the Carib chieftain, concerting stratagems of various kinds to relieve the garrison and annoy the foe. He made desperate sallies whenever the enemy appeared in any force, always leading the van with that headlong valour for which he was noted; making great slaughter with his single arm, and, as usual, escaping unhurt from amidst showers of darts and arrows.

Caonabo saw many of his bravest warriors slain. His forces were daily diminishing, for the Indians, unused to any protracted operations of war, grew weary of this siege, and began to disperse,

returning daily in numbers to their homes. He gave up all further attempt, therefore, on the fortress, and retired filled with admiration of the prowess and achievements of Ojeda *.

The restlesss chieftain was not discouraged by the failure of this enterprise, but meditated schemes of a bolder and more extensive nature. Prowling in secret in the vicinity of Isabella, he noted the enfeebled state of the settlement †. Many of the inhabitants were suffering under various maladies, and most of the men capable of bearing arms were distributed about the country. He now conceived the project of a general league among the caciques, to assemble their forces, and surprise and overwhelm the settlement, and to massacre the Spaniards wherever they could be found. This handful of intruders once exterminated, he trusted that the island would be delivered from all further molestation of the kind; little dreaming of the hopeless nature of the contest, and that where the civilized man once plants his foot, the power of the savage is gone for ever.

* Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, lib. iii., c. 1.

† Hist. del Almirante, c. 60.

Reports of the profligate conduct of the Spaniards had spread throughout the island, and inspired hatred and hostility even among tribes who had never beheld them, nor suffered from their misdeeds. Caonabo found three of the sovereign caciques inclined to co-operate with him, though impressed with deep awe of the supernatural power of the Spaniards, and of their terrific arms and animals. The league, however, met with unexpected opposition in the fifth cacique, Guacanagari, the sovereign of Marien. His conduct in this time of danger, completely manifested the injustice of those suspicions which had been entertained of him by the Spaniards. He refused to join the other caciques with his forces, or to violate those laws of hospitality by which he had considered himself bound to protect and aid the white men, ever since they had been shipwrecked on his coast. He remained quietly in his dominions, entertaining at his own expense a hundred of the suffering soldiery, and supplying all their wants with his accustomed generosity. This conduct drew upon him the odium and hostility of his fellow caciques, particularly of the fierce Carib, Caonabo, and his

brother-in-law, Behechio. They made irruptions into his territories, and inflicted on him various injuries and indignities. Behechio killed one of his wives, and Caonabo carried another away captive *. Nothing, however, could shake the devotion of Guacanagari to the Spaniards; and as his dominions lay immediately adjacent to the settlement, and those of some of the other caciques were very remote, the want of his co-operation impeded for some time the hostile designs of his confederates †.

Such was the critical state to which the affairs of the colony had been reduced, and such the bitter hostility engendered among the kind and gentle people of the island, during the absence of Columbus, and merely in consequence of violating all his regulations. Margarite and Friar Boyle had hastened to Spain to make false representations of the miseries of the island. Had they remained faithfully at their posts, and discharged zealously the trust confided to them, those miseries might have been easily remedied, if not entirely prevented.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 60.

† Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., c. 16.

CHAPTER IV.

MEASURES OF COLUMBUS TO RESTORE THE QUIET OF THE ISLAND. EXPEDITION OF OJEDA TO SURPRISE CAONABO.

[1494.]

IMMEDIATELY after the return of Columbus from Cuba, while he was yet confined to his bed by indisposition, he was gratified by a voluntary visit from Guacanagari. This kind-hearted chieftain manifested the greatest concern at his illness, for he appears to have always entertained an affectionate reverence for the admiral. He again spoke with tears of the massacre at Fort Nativity, dwelling on the exertions he had made in defence of the Spaniards. He now informed Columbus of the secret league forming among the caciques, of his opposition to it, and the consequent persecution he had suffered, of the murder of one of his wives, and the capture of another. He urged the admiral to be on his guard against the designs of Caonabo, and offered to lead his subjects to the field, to fight by the side of the Spaniards, as well

out of friendship for them as in revenge of his own injuries *.

Columbus had always retained a deep sense of the ancient kindness of Guacanagari, and had been unwilling to doubt his faith and friendship; he was rejoiced, therefore, to have all suspicion thus effectually dispelled. Their former amiable intercourse was renewed, with this difference, that the man whom Guacanagari had once relieved and succoured when a shipwrecked stranger on his shores, had suddenly become the arbiter of the fate of himself and all his countrymen.

The manner in which this peaceful island had been exasperated and embroiled by the licentious conduct of the Europeans, was a matter of deep concern to Columbus. He saw all his plans of deriving an immediate revenue to the sovereigns completely impeded. To restore the island to tranquillity required skilful management. His forces were but small, and the awe in which the natives had stood of the white men, as supernatural beings, had been in some degree dispelled. He was too ill to take a personal share in any war-

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., c. 16.

like enterprise; his brother Diego was not of a military character, and Bartholomew was yet a stranger among the Spaniards, and regarded by the leading men with jealousy. Still Columbus considered the threatened combination of the caciques as but imperfectly formed; he trusted to their want of skill and experience in warfare, and conceived that by prompt measures, by proceeding in detail, punishing some, conciliating others, and uniting force, gentleness, and stratagem, he might succeed in dispelling the threatened storm.

His first care was to send a body of armed men to the relief of Fort Magdalena, menaced with destruction by Guatiguana, the cacique of the Grand River, who had massacred the Spaniards quartered in his town. Having relieved the fortress, the troops overran the territory of Guatiguana, killing many of his warriors and carrying others off captives: the chieftain himself made his escape*. He was tributary to Guarionex, sovereign cacique of the Royal Vega. As this Indian prince reigned over a great and populous extent of country, his friendship was highly important to the prosperity

† Herrera, decad. 1, l. ii., c. 16.

of the colony; while there was imminent risk of his hostility, from the unbridled excesses of the Spaniards who had been quartered in different parts of his dominions. Columbus sent for him, therefore, and explained to him that these excesses had been in violation of his orders, and contrary to his good intentions towards the natives, whom it was his wish in every way to please and benefit. He explained, likewise, that the expedition against Guatiguana was an act of mere individual punishment, not of hostility against the territories of Guarionex. The cacique was of a quiet and placable disposition, and whatever anger he might have felt was easily soothed. To link him in some degree to the Spanish interest, Columbus prevailed on him to give his daughter in marriage to an Indian interpreter, a native of the Lucayan islands, who had been to Spain, and had been baptized in Barcelona by the name of Diego Colon*. He took a still stronger precaution to guard against any hostility on the part of the cacique, and to en-

* P. Martyr, decad. 1, l. iv. Gio. Battista Spotorno, in his Memoir of Columbus, has been led into an error by the name of this Indian, and observes that Columbus had a brother named Diego, of whom he seemed to be ashamed, and whom he married to the daughter of an Indian chief.

sure tranquillity in the important region of the Vega. He ordered a fortress to be erected in the midst of his territories, which he named Fort Conception. The easy cacique agreed without hesitation to a measure fraught with ruin to himself, and future slavery to his subjects.

The most formidable enemy remained to be disposed of,—Caonabo, the warlike spirit of the island, the active and daring enemy of the white men; who, from superior notions of policy, was capable of forming dangerous leagues and conspiracies. His territories lay in the central and mountainous parts of the island, rendered difficult of access by rugged rocks, entangled forests, and frequent rivers. To make war upon this subtle and ferocious chieftain, in the depths of his wild woodland territory, and among the fastnesses of his mountains, where, at every step, there would be danger of falling into some sudden ambush, would be a work of time, peril, and uncertain issue. In the meanwhile the settlements would never be secure from his secret and daring enterprises, and the working of the mines would be subject to frequent interruption. While perplexed on this

subject, Columbus was relieved by a bold proposition on the part of Alonzo de Ojeda, who offered to take the Carib chieftain by stratagem, and deliver him alive into his hands. The project was wild, hazardous, and romantic, characteristic of the fearless and adventurous spirit of Ojeda, who was fond of distinguishing himself by the most extravagant exploits and feats of desperate bravery.

Choosing ten bold and hardy followers, well armed and well mounted, and invoking the protection of his patroness the Virgin, whose image as usual he bore with him as a safeguard, Ojeda plunged into the forest, and made his way above sixty leagues at the head of his followers, into the wild territories of Caonabo, where he found the cacique in one of his most populous towns. Ojeda approached Caonabo with great deference and respect, treating him as a sovereign prince. He informed him that he had come on a friendly embassy from the admiral, who was Guamiquina, or chief of the Spaniards, and who had sent him an invaluable present.

Caonabo had tried Ojeda in battle, he had wit-

nessed his fiery prowess, and had conceived a warrior's admiration of him. He received him with a degree of chivalrous courtesy, if such a phrase may apply to the savage state and rude hospitality of a wild warrior of the forest. The free fearless deportment, the great personal strength, and the surprising agility and adroitness of Ojeda in all manly exercises, and in the use of all kinds of weapons, were calculated to delight a savage, and he soon became a great favourite with Caonabo.

Ojeda now used all his influence to prevail upon the cacique to repair to Isabella, for the purpose of making a treaty with Columbus, and becoming the ally and friend of the Spaniards. It is said, that he offered him, as a lure, the bell of the chapel of Isabella. This bell was the wonder of the island. When the Indians heard its melody sounding through the forests as it rung for mass, and beheld the Spaniards hastening towards the chapel, they imagined that it talked, and that the white men obeyed it. With that feeling of superstition with which they regarded all things connected with the Spaniards, they looked upon this

bell as something supernatural, and in their usual phrase, said it had come from "Turey," or the skies. Caonabo had heard this wonderful instrument at a distance, in the course of his prowlings about the settlement, and had longed to see it; but when it was proffered to him as a present of peace, he found it impossible to resist the temptation.

The cacique agreed, therefore, to set out for Isabella; but when the time came to depart, Ojeda beheld with surprise a powerful force of warriors assembled and ready to march. He asked the meaning of taking such an army on a mere friendly visit, to which the cacique proudly replied, that it was not befitting a great prince like him, to go forth scantily attended. Ojeda was little satisfied with this reply; he knew the warlike character of Caonabo, and his deep subtlety, which is the soul of Indian warfare; he feared some sinister design, and that the chieftain might meditate some surprise of the fortress of Isabella, or some attempt upon the person of the admiral. He knew also that it was the wish of Columbus, either to make peace with the cacique, or

to get possession of his person without the alternative of open warfare. He had recourse to a stratagem, therefore, which has an air of fable and romance, but which is recorded by all the contemporary historians with trivial variations, and which, Las Casas assures us, was in current circulation in the island when he arrived there, about six years after the event. It accords too with the adventurous and extravagant character of the man, and with the wild stratagems and vaunting exploits incident to Indian warfare.

In the course of their march, having halted near the river Yegua, Ojeda one day produced a set of manacles of polished steel so highly burnished that they looked like silver. These he assured Caonabo were royal ornaments which had come from heaven, or the "Turey" of Biscay*; that they were worn by the monarchs of Castile on solemn dances, and other high festivities, and were intended as presents to the cacique. He proposed that Caonabo should go to the river and bathe, after which he should be decorated with these

* The principal iron manufactories of Spain are established in Biscay, where the ore is found in abundance.

ornaments, mounted on the horse of Ojeda, and should return in the state of a Spanish monarch, to astonish his subjects. The cacique, with that fondness for glittering ornaments common to savages, was dazzled with the sight; his proud military spirit, also, was flattered with the idea of bestriding one of those tremendous animals so dreaded by his countrymen. He accompanied Ojeda and his followers to the river, with but few attendants, dreading nothing from nine or ten strangers when thus surrounded by his army. After the cacique had bathed in the river, he was assisted to mount behind Ojeda, and the shackles were then adjusted. This done they pranced round among the savages, who were astonished to behold their cacique in glittering array, and mounted on one of these fearful animals. Ojeda made several circuits to gain space, followed by his little band of horsemen, the Indians shrinking back with affright from the prancing steeds. At length he made a wide sweep into the forest, until the trees concealed him from the sight of the army. His followers then closed round him, and drawing their swords, threatened Caonabo with instant

death if he made the least noise or resistance, though indeed his manacles and shackles effectually prevented the latter. They bound him with cords to Ojeda to prevent his falling, or effecting an escape, then putting spurs to their horses, they dashed across the Yegua, and made off through the woods with their prize*.

They had now fifty or sixty leagues of wilderness to traverse on their way homewards, with here and there large Indian towns. They had borne off their captive far beyond the pursuit of his subjects; but the utmost vigilance was requisite to prevent his escape during this long and toilsome journey, and to avoid exciting the hostilities of any confederate cacique. They had to shun the populous parts of the country therefore, or to pass through the Indian towns at full gallop. They suffered greatly from fatigue, hunger, and watchfulness; encountering many perils, fording and swimming the numerous rivers

* This romantic exploit of Ojeda is recorded at large by Las Casas; by his copyist Herrera (decad. 1, l. ii., c. 16); by Fernando Pizarro, in his Varones Illustres del Nuevo Mundo; and by Charlevoix in his History of St. Domingo. Peter Martyr and others have given it more concisely, alluding to, but not inserting its romantic details.

of the plains, toiling through the deep tangled forests, and clambering over the high and rocky mountains. They accomplished all in safety, and Ojeda entered Isabella in triumph from this most wild and characteristic enterprise, with his savage Indian warrior bound behind him a captive.

Columbus could not refrain from expressing his great satisfaction when this dangerous foe was delivered into his hands. The haughty Carib met him with a lofty and unsubdued air, disdaining to conciliate him by submission, or to deprecate his vengeance for the blood of white men which he had shed. He never bowed his spirit to captivity; on the contrary, though completely at the mercy of the Spaniards, he displayed that boasting defiance which is a part of Indian heroism, and which the savage maintains towards his tormentors, even amidst the agonies of the faggot and the stake. He vaunted his achievement in surprising and burning the fortress of Nativity, and slaughtering its garrison, and declared that he had secretly reconnoitred Isabella,

with an intention of wreaking upon it the same desolation.

Columbus, though struck with the wild heroism of this fierce chieftain, considered him a dangerous enemy, whom, for the peace of the island, it was necessary carefully to guard. He determined to send him to Spain; in the mean time he ordered that he should be treated with kindness and respect, and lodged him in a part of his own dwelling-house, where, however, he kept him a close prisoner in chains; probably in the splendid shackles which had ensnared him. This precaution must have been necessary from the insecurity of his prison; for Las Casas observes, that the admiral's house not being spacious, nor having many chambers, the captive chieftain could be seen from the portal *.

Caonabo always maintained a haughty deportment towards Columbus, while he never evinced the least animosity against Ojeda for the artifice to which he had fallen a victim. It rather increased his admiration of him, as a consummate warrior, looking upon it as the exploit of a master-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 102.

spirit to have pounced upon him, and borne him off in this hawk-like manner, from the very midst of his fighting-men. There is nothing that an Indian more admires in warfare, than a deep well-executed stratagem.

Columbus was accustomed to bear himself with an air of dignity and authority as admiral and viceroy, and exacted great personal respect. When he entered the apartment therefore where Caonabo was confined, all present rose, according to custom, and payed him reverence. The cacique alone neither moved, nor took any notice of him. On the contrary when Ojeda entered, though small in person and without external state, Caonabo immediately rose and saluted him with profound respect. On being asked the reason of this, Columbus being Guamiquina, or great chief over all, and Ojeda but one of his subjects, the proud Carib replied, that the admiral had never dared to come personally to his house and seize him, it was only through the valour of Ojeda he was his prisoner; to Ojeda, therefore, he owed reverence, not to the admiral *.

* Las Casas, ubi sup., c. 102.

The captivity of Caonabo was deeply felt by his subjects, for the natives of this island seem generally to have been extremely loyal, and strongly attached to their caciques. One of the brothers of Caonabo, a warrior of great courage and address, and very popular among the Indians, assembled an army of more than seven thousand men, and led them secretly to the neighbourhood of St. Thomas, where Ojeda was again in command. His intention was to surprise a number of Spaniards, in hopes of obtaining his brother in exchange for them. Ojeda, as usual, had notice of the design, but was not to be again shut up in his fortress. Having been reinforced by a detachment sent by the adelantado, he left a sufficient force in garrison, and with the remainder, and his little troop of horse, set off boldly to meet the savages. The brother of Caonabo, when he saw the Spaniards approaching, showed some military skill, disposing of his army in five battalions. The impetuous attack of Ojeda, however, who, according to his custom, rushed on furiously in the advance with his handful of horsemen, threw the Indian warriors into sudden panic.

They could not withstand the terrible appearance of these glittering steel-clad beings, wielding their flashing weapons and bestriding animals which appeared to be ferocious beasts of prey. They threw down their weapons and took to flight, many were slain, more were taken prisoners, and among the latter was the brother of Caonabo, bravely fighting in a noble yet desperate cause*.

* Oviedo. Cronica de los Indias, l. iii., c. 1. Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, l. ii., p. 131.

CHAPTER V.

ARRIVAL OF ANTONIO DE TORRES WITH FOUR SHIPS FROM SPAIN. HIS RETURN WITH INDIAN SLAVES.

[1494.]

The colony was still suffering greatly from want of provisions; the European stock was nearly exhausted, and such was the idleness and improvidence of the colonists, or the confusion into which they had been thrown by the hostilities of the natives, or such was their exclusive eagerness after the precious metals, that they seem to have neglected the true wealth of the island, its quick and productive soil, and to have been in constant danger of famine, in the midst of fertility.

At length their sufferings were relieved by the arrival of four ships, commanded by Antonio Torres. They brought an ample supply of provisions, which diffused universal joy. There were also a physician and an apothecary, whose aid

was greatly needed in the sickly state of the colony; but above all, there were mechanics, millers, fishermen, gardeners, and husbandmen,—the true wholesome kind of population for a colony, calculated to bring out its best resources, and to produce that interchange of useful labour and of the necessaries of life, which renders a community thriving and self-dependent.

The letters from the sovereigns, brought by Torres, (dated August 16, 1494,) were of the most gratifying kind, expressing the highest satisfaction at the accounts sent home by the admiral, and acknowledging that everything in the course of his discoveries had turned out as he had predicted. They evinced the liveliest interest in the affairs of the colony, and a desire of receiving frequent despatches as to its situation, proposing that a caravel should sail each month from Isabella and Spain. They informed him that all differences with Portugal were amicably adjusted, and acquainted him with the conventional agreement with that power relative to a geographical line, separating their newly-discovered possessions, requesting him to respect this agreement in the

course of his discoveries. As in adjusting the arrangement with Portugal, and in drawing the proposed line, it was important to have the best advice, the sovereigns requested Columbus to return and be present at the convention, or, in case that should be inconvenient, to send his brother Bartholomew, or any other person whom he should consider fully competent, furnished with such maps, charts, and designs as might be of service in the negotiation *.

There was another letter, addressed generally to the inhabitants of the colony, and to all who should proceed on voyages of discovery, commanding them to obey Columbus as implicitly as they would the sovereigns themselves, under pain of their high displeasure, and a fine of ten thousand maravedies for each offence.

Such was the well-merited confidence reposed at this moment by the sovereigns in Columbus, but which was soon to be blighted by the insidious reports of worthless men. He was already aware of the complaints and misrepresentations which had been sent home from the colony, and which

* Herrera, decad. 1, lib. ii., c. 17.

would be enforced by Margarite and Friar Boyle. He was aware that he had only that uncertain footing which a stranger always possesses in the service of a foreign country, where he has no friends or connexions to support him, and where even his very merits increase the eagerness of envy to cast him down. His efforts to promote the working of the mines, and to explore the resources of the island, had been impeded by the misconduct of Margarite and the disorderly life of the Spaniards in general, yet he apprehended that the very evils which they had produced would be alleged against him, and the want of profitable returns be cited to discredit and embarrass his expeditions.

To counteract any misrepresentations of the kind, Columbus hastened the return of the ships, and would have returned with them, not merely to comply with the wishes of the sovereigns in being present at the settlement of the geographical line, but to vindicate himself and his enterprises from the aspersions of his enemies. The malady, however, which confined him to his bed, prevented his departure; and his brother Bartholomew was required to aid, with his practical good sense, and

his resolute spirit, in regulating the disordered affairs of the island. It was determined, therefore, to send home his brother Diego, to attend to the wishes of the sovereigns, and to take care of his interests at court. At the same time he exerted himself to the utmost to send by the ships satisfactory proofs of the value of his discoveries. He remitted by them all the gold that he could collect, with specimens of other metals, and of various fruits and valuable plants, which he had collected either in Hispaniola or in the course of his voyage. In his eagerness to produce immediate profit, and to indemnify the sovereigns for those expenses which bore hard upon the royal treasury, he sent, likewise, above five hundred Indian prisoners, who, he suggested, might be sold as slaves at Seville.

It is painful to find the brilliant renown of Columbus sullied by so foul a stain, and the glory of his enterprises degraded by such flagrant violations of humanity. The customs of the times, however, must be pleaded in his apology. The precedent had been given long before, by both Spaniards and Portuguese, in their African discoveries, wherein the traffic in slaves had formed one

of the greatest sources of profit. In fact the practice had been sanctioned by the highest authority, by that of the church itself, and the most learned theologians had pronounced all barbarous and infidel nations, who shut their ears to the truths of Christianity, as fair objects of war and rapine, of captivity and slavery. If Columbus needed any practical illustration of this doctrine, he had it in the conduct of Ferdinand himself, in his late wars with the Moors of Granada, in which he had always been surrounded by a crowd of ghostly advisers, and had professed to do every thing for the glory and advancement of the faith. In this holy war, as it was termed, it was a common practice to make inroads into the Moorish territories and carry off *cavalgadas*, not merely of flocks and herds, but of human beings, and those not warriors taken with weapons in their hands, but quiet villagers, labouring peasantry, and helpless women and children. These were carried to the mart at Seville, or to other populous towns, and sold into slavery. The capture of Malaga was a memorable instance, where, as a punishment for an obstinate and brave defence, which should have excited

admiration rather than revenge, eleven thousand people of both sexes, and of all ranks and ages, many of them highly cultivated and delicately reared, were suddenly torn from their homes, severed from each other, and swept into menial slavery, even though half of their ransoms had been paid. These circumstances are not advanced to vindicate, but to palliate the conduct of Columbus. He acted but in conformity to the customs of the times, and was sanctioned by the example of the sovereign under whom he served. Las Casas, the zealous and enthusiastic advocate of the Indians, who suffers no opportunity to escape him of exclaiming in vehement terms against their slavery, speaks with indulgence of Columbus on this head. "If those pious and learned men," he observes, "whom the sovereigns took for guides and instructors, were so ignorant of the injustice of this practice, it is no wonder that the unlettered admiral should not be conscious of its impropriety *."

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., t. i., cap. 122, MS.

CHAPTER VI.

EXPEDITION OF COLUMBUS AGAINST THE INDIANS OF THE VEGA. BATTLE.

[1494.]

Notwithstanding the defeat of the Indians by Ojeda, they still retained hostile intentions against the Spaniards. The idea of their cacique being a prisoner and in chains, enraged the natives of Magana, and the general sympathy manifested by other tribes of the island, shew how widely that intelligent savage had extended his influence, and how greatly he was admired. He had still active and powerful relatives remaining to attempt his rescue, or revenge his fall. One of his brothers, Manicaotex by name, a carib, bold and warlike as himself, succeeded to the sway over his subjects. His favourite wife also, Anacaona, so famous for her charms, had great influence over her brother Behechio, cacique of the populous province of Xaragua. Through these means a violent and general hostility to the Spaniards was excited through-

out the island, and the formidable league of the caciques, which Caonabo had in vain attempted to accomplish when at large, was produced by his captivity. Guacanagari, the cacique of Marien, alone remained friendly to the Spaniards, giving them timely information of the gathering storm, and offering to take the field with them as a faithful ally.

The protracted illness of Columbus, the scantiness of his military force, and the wretched state of the colonists in general, reduced by sickness and scarcity to great bodily weakness, had hitherto induced him to try every means of conciliation and stratagem to avert and dissolve the confederacy. He had at length recovered his health, and his followers were in some degree refreshed and invigorated by the supplies brought by the ships. At this time, he received intelligence that the allied caciques were actually assembled in great force in the Vega, within two days march of Isabella, with an intention of making a general assault upon the settlement, and overwhelming it by numbers. Columbus resolved to take the field at once, and to carry the war into the territories

of the enemy, rather than suffer it to be brought into his own dominions.

The whole sound and effective force that he could muster in the present infirm state of the colony, did not exceed two hundred infantry and twenty horse. They were armed with cross-bows, swords, lances and espingardas, or heavy arquebuses, which in those days were used with rests, and sometimes mounted on wheels. With these formidable weapons, a handful of European warriors, cased in steel and covered with bucklers, were able to cope with thousands of naked savages. They had aid of another kind, however, consisting of twenty blood-hounds, animals scarcely less terrible to the Indians than the horses, and infinitely more fatal. They were fearless and ferocious; nothing daunted them, nor when they had once seized upon their prey, could any thing compel them to relinquish their hold. The naked bodies of the Indians offered no defence against their attacks. They sprang on them, dragged them to the earth, and tore them to pieces.

The admiral was accompanied in the expedition by his brother Bartholomew, whose counsel and

aid he sought on all occasions, and had not merely great personal force and undaunted courage, but also a decidedly military turn of mind. Guacanagari also brought his people into the field: neither he nor his subjects, however, were of a warlike character, nor calculated to render much assistance. The chief advantage of his co-operation, was, that it completely severed him from the other caciques; and ensured the dependance of himself and his subjects upon the Spaniards. In the present infant state of the colony its chief security depended upon jealousies and dissensions sown among the native powers of the island.

It was on the 27th of March, 1495, that Columbus issued forth from Isabella with his little army, and advanced by marches of ten leagues a day in quest of the enemy. He ascended again to the mountain-pass of the Cavaliers, from whence he had first looked down upon the Vega. With what different feelings did he now contemplate it. The vile passions of the white men had already converted this smiling, beautiful, and once peaceful and hospitable region, into a land of wrath and hostility. Wherever the smoke of an Indian

town rose from among the trees, and dimmed the clear atmosphere, it marked a horde of exasperated enemies, and the deep rich forests below him swarmed with lurking warriors. In the picture which his imagination had drawn of the peaceful and inoffensive nature of this people, he had flattered himself with the idea of ruling over them as a patron and benefactor, but now he found the character of a conqueror forced upon him.

The Indians had notice, by their scouts, of his approach, but though they had already had some slight experience of the warfare of the white men, they were filled with confidence by the vast superiority of their numbers, which, it is said, amounted to one hundred thousand men *. This is probably an exaggeration, for as Indians never draw out into the open field in order of battle, but lurk among the forests, it is difficult to ascertain their force. Their rapid movements also, and their sudden sallies and retreats from various parts, together with the wild shouts and yells from opposite quarters of the woodlands, are calculated to give an exaggerated idea of their number.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 104. MS.

The army, however, must have been great, as it consisted of the combined forces of several caciques of this populous island. It was commanded by Manicaotex, the brother of Caonabo. The Indians, who were little skilled in numeration and incapable of reckoning beyond ten, had a simple mode of ascertaining and describing the force of an enemy, by counting out a grain of maize or Indian corn for every warrior. When, therefore, the spies, who had watched from rocks and thickets the march of Columbus, came back with a mere handful of corn as the amount of his army, the caciques scoffed at the idea of so scanty a number making head against their countless multitude*.

Columbus drew near to the enemy about the place were the town of St. Jago has since been built. Having ascertained the great force of the Indians, Don Bartholomew advised that their little army should be divided into detachments, and attack at the same moment, from several quarters: this plan was adopted. The infantry, separating into different bodies, advanced suddenly from various directions with great din of drums and

* Las Casas, ubi sup.

trumpets, and a destructive discharge of fire-arms from the covert of the trees. The Indians were struck with panic, and thrown into complete confusion. An army seemed pressing upon them from every quarter, their fellow warriors were laid low by the balls of the arquebuses, which seemed to burst with thunder and lightning from the forests. While driven together and confounded by these attacks, Alonzo de Ojeda charged impetuously on their main body with his troop of cavalry, cutting his way into the centre with lance and sabre. The horses bore down the terrified Indians, while their riders dealt their blows on all sides unopposed. The blood-hounds were at the same time let loose, and rushed with sanguinary fury upon the naked savages, seizing them by the throat, dragging them to the earth, and tearing out their bowels. The Indians, unaccustomed to large and fierce quadrupeds of any kind, were struck with horror when assailed by these ferocious animals. They thought the horses equally fierce and devouring. The contest, if such it might be called, was of short duration. What resistance could a multitude of naked, unwarlike,

and undisciplined savages make with no other arms than clubs and arrows and darts hardened in the fire, against soldiers clad in iron, wielding weapons of steel and tremendous fire arms, and aided by ferocious monsters, whose very aspect struck terror to the heart of the stoutest warrior!

The Indians fled in every direction with yells and howlings; some clambered to the top of rocks and precipices, from whence they made piteous supplications, and offers of complete submission; many were killed, many made prisoners, and the confederacy was for the time completely broken up and dispersed.

Guacanagari had accompanied the Spaniards into the field according to his promise, but he was little more than a spectator of this battle or rather rout. He was not of a martial spirit, and both he and his subjects must have shrunk with awe at this unusual and terrific burst of war, even though on the part of their allies. His participation in the hostilities of the white men was never forgiven by the other caciques, and he returned to his dominions followed by the hatred and execrations of all the islanders.

CHAPTER VII.

SUBJUGATION OF THE NATIVES. IMPOSITION OF TRIBUTE.

[1494.]

Columbus followed up his victory by making a military tour through various parts of the island, and reducing it to obedience. The natives made occasional attempts at opposition, but they were easily checked. The troop of cavalry headed by Ojeda was found of great efficacy in this service, from the rapidity of its movements, the active intrepidity of its commander, and especially from the great awe and terror inspired by the horses. There was no service too wild and hazardous for Ojeda. If any appearance of war arose in a distant part of the country, he would penetrate with his little squadron of cavalry through the depths of the forests, and fall suddenly like a thunder-bolt upon the enemy, disconcerting all their combinations and enforcing implicit submission.

The Royal Vega was soon brought into subjec-

tion. Being an immense plain, perfectly level, it was easily overrun by the horsemen, whose appearance struck terror into its most populous villages. Guarionex, its sovereign cacique, was of a mild and placable character, and though he had been roused to war by the instigation of the neighbouring chieftains, he readily submitted to the domination of the Spaniards. Maniocatex, the brother of Caonabo, was also obliged to sue for peace, and being the prime mover of the confederacy, the other caciques followed his example. Behechio alone, the cacique of Xaragua, and brother-in-law of Caonabo, made no overtures of submission. His territories lay remote from Isabella, at the western extremity of the island, around the deep bay called the Bight of Leogan, and the long peninsula called Cape Tiburon. They were difficult of access, and had not as yet been visited by the white men. He retired into his domains, taking with him his sister, the lovely Anacoana, wife of Caonabo, whom he cherished with fraternal affection under her misfortunes, who soon acquired almost equal sway over his subjects with himself, and was destined

subsequently to make some figure in the events of the island.

Having been forced to take the field by the confederacy of the caciques, Columbus now asserted the right of a conqueror, and considered how he might turn his conquest to most profit. His constant anxiety was to made wealthy returns to Spain, for the purpose of indemnifying the sovereigns for their great expenses; of meeting the public expectations, so extravagantly excited; and above all of silencing the calumnies of those who he knew had gone home determined to make the most discouraging representations of his discoveries. He endeavoured, therefore, to raise a large and immediate revenue from the island, by imposing heavy tributes on the subjected provinces. In those of the Vega, Cibao, and all the region of the mines, each individual above the age of fourteen years, was required to pay, every three months, the measure of a Flemish hawk's-bell of gold dust*. The caciques had to pay a much larger amount for their personal tribute.

* A hawk's-bell, according to Las Casas (Hist. Ind. l. i., c. 105) contains about three castellanos worth of gold dust, equal to five dollars, and in

Maniocatex, the brother of Caonabo, was obliged individually to render in, every three months, half a calabash of gold, amounting to one hundred and fifty pesos. On those districts which were distant from the mines, and produced no gold, each individual was required to furnish an arroba (twenty-five pounds) of cotton every three months. Each Indian, on rendering this tribute, received a copper medal as a certificate of payment, which he was to wear suspended round his neck; those who were found without such documents were liable to arrest and punishment.

The taxes and tributes thus imposed, bore hard upon the spirit of the natives, accustomed to be but lightly tasked by their caciques; and the caciques themselves found the exactions intolerably grievous. Guarionex, the sovereign of the Royal Vega, represented to Columbus the difficulty he had in complying with the terms of his tribute. His richly fertile plain yielded no gold; and though the mountains on his borders contained mines, and their brooks and torrents washed down

estimating the superior value of gold in those days, equivalent to fifteen dollars of our time. A quantity of gold worth one hundred and fifty castellanos, was equivalent to seven hundred and ninety-eight dollars of the present day.

gold dust into the sands of the rivers, yet his subjects were not skilled in the art of collecting it. He proffered, therefore, instead of the tribute required, to cultivate with grain, a band of country stretching across the island from sea to sea, enough says Las Casas, to have furnished all Castile with bread for ten years *.

His offer was rejected. Columbus knew that gold alone would satisfy the avaricious dreams excited in Spain, and ensure the popularity and success of his enterprises. Seeing, however, the difficulty that many of the Indians had in furnishing the amount of gold dust required of them, he lowered the demand to the measure of one half of a hawk's-bell. It is a curious circumstance, and might furnish some poetical conceits, that the miseries of the poor natives should thus be measured out, as it were, by the very bawbles which first fascinated them.

To enforce the payment of these tributes, and to maintain the subjection of the island, Columbus put the fortress already built in a strong state of defence, and erected others. Beside those of Isa-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 105.

bella, and of St. Thomas in the mountains of Cibao, there were now the fortress of Magdalena, in the Royal Vega, three or four leagues from the place where the town of Santiago was afterwards built; another called Catalina, the site of which is forgotten; another called Esperanza, on the banks of the river Yagua, in Cibao; but the most important of those recently erected, was Fort Conception, in one of the most fruitful and beautiful parts of the Vega, about fifteen leagues to the east of Magdalena, controlling the extensive and populous domains of Guarionex*.

In this way was the yoke of servitude fixed upon the island, and its thraldom effectually ensured. Deep despair now fell upon the natives when they found a perpetual task inflicted upon them, enforced at stated and frequently recurring periods. Weak and indolent by nature, unused to labour of any kind, and brought up in the untasked idleness of their soft climate and their fruitful groves, death itself seemed preferable to a life of toil and anxiety. They saw no end to this harassing evil, which had so suddenly fallen

* Las Casas, ubi sup., c. 110.

upon them; no escape from its all-pervading influence; no prospect of return to that roving independence and ample leisure, so dear to the wild inhabitants of the forest. The pleasant life of the island was at an end; the dream in the shade by day; the slumber during the sultry noontide heat by the fountain or the stream, or under the spreading palm-tree; and the song, the dance, and the game in the mellow evening, when summoned to their simple amusements by the rude Indian drum. They were now obliged to grope day by day, with bending body and anxious eye, along the borders of their rivers, sifting the sands for the grains of gold which every day grew more scanty; or to labour in their fields beneath the fervour of a tropical sun, to raise food for their taskmasters, or to produce the vegetable tribute imposed upon them. They sunk to sleep weary and exhausted at night, with the certainty that the next day was but to be a repetition of the same toil and suffering. Or if they occasionally indulged in their national dances, the ballads to which they kept time were of a melancholy and plaintive character. They spoke of the times

that were past before the white men had introduced sorrow and slavery, and weary labour among them; and they rehearsed pretended prophecies, handed down from their ancestors, foretelling the invasion of the Spaniards; that strangers should come into their island, clothed in apparel, with swords capable of cleaving a man asunder at a blow, under whose yoke their posterity should be subdued. These ballads, or areytos, they sang with mournful tunes and doleful voices, bewailing the loss of their liberty and their painful servitude *.

They had flattered themselves, for a time, that the visit of the strangers would be but temporary, and that spreading their ample sails, their ships would once more bear them back to their home in the sky. In their simplicity, they had repeatedly inquired when they intended to return to Turey, or the heavens. They now beheld them taking root, as it were, in the island. They beheld their vessels lying idle and rotting in the harbour, while the crews, scattered about the country, were building habitations and fortresses, the solid construc-

* Peter Martyr, decad. 3, lib. ix.

tion of which, unlike their own slight cabins, gave evidence of permanent residence *.

Finding how vain was all attempt to deliver themselves by warlike means, from these invincible intruders, they now concerted a forlorn and desperate mode of annoyance. They perceived that the settlement suffered greatly from shortness of provisions, and depended in a considerable degree, upon the supplies furnished by the natives. The fortresses in the interior also, and the Spaniards quartered in the villages, looked almost entirely to them for subsistence. They agreed, therefore, among themselves, not to cultivate the fruits, the roots and maize, which formed their chief articles of food, and to destroy those already growing; hoping that thus, by producing a famine, they might starve the strangers from the island. They little knew, observes Las Casas, one of the characteristics of the Spaniards, who the more hungry they are, the more inflexible they become, and the more hardened to endure suffering †.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 106.

† No conociendo la propriedad de los Españoles, los cuales cuanto mas hambrientos, tanto mayor teson tienen y mas duros son de sufrir y para sufrir. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 106.

They carried their plan generally into effect, abandoning their habitations, laying waste the produce of their fields and groves, and retiring to the mountains, where there were roots and herbs on which they could subsist, and abundance of those kind of rabbits called utias.

This measure did indeed produce much distress among the Spaniards, but they had foreign resources and were enabled to endure it by husbanding the partial supplies brought by their ships; the most disastrous effects fell upon the natives themselves. The Spaniards stationed in the various fortresses, finding that there was not only no hope of tribute, but a danger of famine from this wanton waste and sudden desertion, pursued the natives to their retreats, to compel them to return to labour. The Indians took refuge in the most steril and dreary heights; flying from one wild retreat to another, the women with their children in their arms or at their backs, and all worn out with fatigue and hunger, and harassed by perpetual alarms. In every noise of the forest or the mountain they fancied they heard the sound of their pursuers; they hid themselves

in damp and dismal caverns, or in the rocky banks and margins of the torrents, and not daring to hunt, or fish, or even to venture forth in quest of nourishing roots and vegetables, they had to satisfy their raging hunger with unwholesome food. In this way, many thousands of them perished miserably, through famine, fatigue, terror, and various contagious maladies engendered by their sufferings. All spirit of opposition was at length completely quelled. The surviving Indians returned in despair to their habitations, and submitted humbly to the yoke. So deep an awe did they conceive of their conquerors, that it is said a Spaniard might go singly and securely all over the island, and the natives would even transport him from place to place on their shoulders *.

Before passing on to other events, it may be proper here to notice the fate of Guacanagari, as he makes no further appearance in the course of this history. His friendship for the Spaniards had severed him from his countrymen, but it did not exonerate him from the general woes of the island. His territories, like those of the other caciques,

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., cap. 106. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 60.

were subjected to a tribute, which his people, with the common repugnance to labour, found it difficult to pay. Columbus, who knew his worth, and could have protected him, was long absent, either in the interior of the island, or detained in Europe by his own wrongs. In the interval, the Spaniards forgot the hospitality and services of Guacanagari, and his tribute was harshly exacted. He found himself overwhelmed with opprobrium from his countrymen at large, and assailed by the clamours and lamentations of his suffering subjects. The strangers whom he had succoured in distress, and taken as it were to the bosom of his native island, had become its tyrants and oppressors. Care, and toil, and poverty, and strong-handed violence, had spread their curses over the land, and he felt as if he had invoked them on his race. Unable to bear the hostilities of his fellow caciques, the woes of his subjects, and the extortions of his ungrateful allies, he took refuge at last in the mountains, where he died obscurely and in misery*.

An attempt has been made by Oviedo to defence the character of this Indian prince: it is not for

* Charlevoix, Hist. de St. Doming., l. ii.

Spaniards, however, to excuse their own ingratitude by casting a stigma upon his name. He appears to have always manifested towards them that true friendship which shines brightest in the dark days of adversity. He might have played a nobler part, in making a stand, with his brother caciques, to drive these intruders from his native soil; but he appears to have been fascinated by his admiration of the strangers, and his personal attachment to Columbus. He was bountiful, hospitable, affectionate, and kind-hearted; competent to rule a gentle and unwarlike people in the happier days of the island, but unfitted, through the softness of his nature, for the stern turmoil which followed the arrival of the white men.

CHAPTER VIII.

INTRIGUES AGAINST COLUMBUS IN THE COURT OF SPAIN. AGUADO SENT TO INVESTIGATE THE AFFAIRS OF HISPANIOLA.

[1495.]

While Columbus was endeavouring to remedy the evils produced by the misconduct of Margarite and his followers, that recreant commander, and his politic coadjutor Friar Boyle, were busily undermining his reputation in the court of Castile. They accused him of deceiving the sovereigns and the public by extravagant descriptions of the countries he had discovered; they pronounced the island of Hispaniola a source of expense rather than profit, and they drew a dismal picture of the sufferings of the colony, occasioned, as they said, by the oppressions of Columbus and his brothers. They charged him with tasking the community with excessive labour during a time of general sickness and debility; with stopping the rations of individuals on the most trifling pretext, to the

great detriment of their healths; with wantonly inflicting severe corporal punishments on the common people, and with heaping indignities on Spanish gentlemen of rank. They said nothing, however, of the exigencies which had called for unusual labour; nor of the idleness and profligacy of the commonalty, which required coercion and chastisement; nor of the seditious cabals of the Spanish cavaliers, who had been treated with indulgence rather than severity. In addition to these complaints, they represented the state of confusion of the island, in consequence of the absence of the admiral, and the uncertainty which prevailed concerning his fate, intimating the probability of his having perished in his fool-hardy attempts to explore unknown seas, and discover unprofitable lands.

These prejudiced and exaggerated representations derived much weight from the official situations of Margarite and Friar Boyle. They were supported by the testimony of many individuals, the discontented and factious idlers of the colony, who had returned with them to Spain. Some of these had connexions of rank who were ready to

resent, with Spanish haughtiness, what they considered the arrogant assumptions of an ignoble foreigner. Thus the popularity of Columbus received a vital blow, and immediately began to decline. The confidence of the sovereigns also was impaired, and precautions were adopted which savour strongly of the cautious and suspicious policy of Ferdinand.

It was determined to send some person of trust and confidence, who should take upon himself the government of the island in case of the continued absence of the admiral, and who, even in the event of his return, should inquire into the alleged evils and abuses, and remedy such as should appear really in existence. The person proposed for this difficult office was Diego Carillo, a commander of a military order; but as he was not immediately prepared to sail with the fleet of caravels about to depart with supplies, the sovereigns wrote to Fonseca, the superintendant of India affairs, to send some trusty person with the vessels, to take charge of the provisions with which they were freighted. These he was to distribute among the colonists, under the supervision of the admiral, or,

absence, in presence of those in authority. He was also to collect information concerning the manner in which the island had been governed, the conduct of persons in office, the causes and authors of existing grievances, and the measures by which they were to be remedied. Having collected such information, he was to return and make report to the sovereigns, but in case he should find the admiral at the island, every thing was to remain subject to his control. There was another measure adopted by the sovereigns about this time, which likewise shews the declining favour of Columbus. On the 10th of April, 1495, a proclamation was issued, giving general permission to native-born subjects to settle in the island of Hispaniola, and to go on private voyages of discovery and traffic to the New World. This was granted, subject to certain conditions.

All vessels were to sail exclusively from the port of Cadiz, and under the inspection of officers appointed by the crown. Those who embarked for Hispaniola without pay, and at their own expense, were to have lands assigned to them, and to be provisioned for one year, with a right to

retain such lands, and all houses they might erect upon them. Of all gold which they might collect, they were to retain one third for themselves, and pay the remaining two thirds to the crown. Of all other articles of merchandize, the produce of the island, they were to pay merely one tenth to the crown. Their purchases were to be made in the presence of officers appointed by the sovereigns, and the royal dues paid into the hands of the king's receiver.

Each ship sailing on private enterprise, was to take one or two persons named by the royal officers at Cadiz. One tenth of the tonnage of the ship was to be at the service of the crown, free of charge. One tenth of whatever such ships should procure in the newly-discovered countries, was to be paid to the crown on their return. These regulations included private ships trading to Hispaniola with provisions.

For every vessel thus fitted out on private adventure, Columbus, in consideration of his privilege of an eighth of tonnage, was to have the right to freight one on his own account.

This general licence for voyages of discovery

was made in consequence of the earnest applications of Vincent Yañes Pinzon, and other able and intrepid navigators, most of whom had sailed with Columbus. They offered to make voyages at their own cost and hazard. The offer was tempting, and well-timed. The government was poor, the expeditions of Columbus were expensive, yet their object was too important to be neglected. Here was an opportunity of attaining all the ends proposed, not merely without expense, but with a certainty of gain. The permission, therefore, was granted, without consulting the opinion or the wishes of the admiral. It was loudly complained of by him, as an infringement of his privileges, and as disturbing the career of regular and well-organized discovery, by the licentious and sometimes predatory enterprises of reckless adventurers. Doubtless, much of the odium that has attached itself to the Spanish discoveries in the New World, has arisen from the grasping avidity of private individuals.

Just at this juncture, in the early part of April, while the interests of Columbus were in such a critical situation, the ships commanded by Torres

arrived in Spain. They brought intelligence of the safe return of the admiral to Hispaniola, from his voyage along the southern coast of Cuba, with the evidence which he had collected to prove that it was the extremity of the Asiatic continent, and that he had penetrated to the borders of the wealthiest countries of the East. Specimens were likewise brought of the gold, and the various animal and vegetable curiosities, which he had procured in the course of this voyage. No arrival could have been more timely. It at once removed all doubts respecting his safety, and obviated the necessity of part of the precautionary measures then on the point of being taken. The supposed discovery of the rich coast of Asia, also, threw a temporary splendour about his expedition, and again awakened the gratitude of the sovereigns. The effect was immediately apparent in their measures. Instead of leaving it to the discretion of Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca to appoint whom he pleased to the commission of inquiry about to be sent out, they retracted that power, and nominated Juan Aguado.

He was chosen, because, on returning from

Hispaniola, he had been strongly recommended to royal favour by Columbus. It was intended, therefore, as a mark of consideration to the latter, to appoint as commissioner a person of whom he had expressed so high an opinion, and who, it was to be presumed, entertained for him a grateful regard.

Fonseca, in virtue of his official station as superintendant of the affairs of the Indies, and probably to gratify his growing animosity for Columbus, had detained a quantity of gold which Don Diego, brother to the admiral, had brought on his own private account. The sovereigns wrote to him repeatedly, ordering him not to demand the gold, or if he had seized it, to return it immediately, with satisfactory explanations, and to write to Columbus in terms calculated to sooth any angry feelings which he might have excited. He was ordered, also, to consult the persons recently arrived from Hispaniola, in what manner he could yield satisfaction to the admiral, and to act accordingly. Fonseca thus suffered one of the severest humiliations of an arrogant spirit, that of being obliged to make atonement for its arro-

gance. It quickened, however, the malice which he had conceived against the admiral and his family. Unfortunately his official situation, and the royal confidence which he enjoyed, gave him opportunities of gratifying it subsequently in a thousand insidious ways.

While the sovereigns thus endeavoured to avoid any act which might give umbrage to Columbus, they took certain measures to provide for the tranquillity of the colony. In a letter to the admiral, they directed that the number of persons in the settlement should be limited to five hundred, a greater number being considered unnecessary for the service of the island, and a burthensome expense to the crown. To prevent further discontents about provisions, they ordered that the rations of individuals should be dealt out in portions every fifteen days; and that all punishment by short allowance, or the stoppage of rations, should be discontinued, as tending to injure the healths of the colonists, who required every assistance of nourishing diet, to fortify them against the maladies incident to a strange climate.

An able and experienced metallurgist, named Pablo Belvis, was sent out in place of the wrong-headed Fermin Zedo. He was furnished with all the necessary engines and implements for mining, and assaying, and purifying the precious metals, and with liberal pay and privileges. Ecclesiastics were also sent to supply the place of Friar Boyle, and of certain of his brethren, who desired to leave the island. The instruction and conversion of the natives continued to awaken more and more the generous solicitude of the queen. In the ships of Torres a large number of Indians arrived, who had been captured in the recent wars with the caciques. Royal orders had been issued, that they should be sold as slaves in the markets of Andalusia, as had been the custom with respect to negroes taken on the coast of Africa, and to Moorish prisoners captured in the war with Granada. Isabella, however, had been deeply interested by the accounts given of the gentle and hospitable character of these islanders, and of their great docility. The discovery had been made under her immediate auspices; she looked upon these people as under her peculiar care,

and she anticipated, with pious enthusiasm, the glory of leading them from darkness into the paths of light. Her compassionate spirit revolted at the idea of treating them as slaves, even though sanctioned by the customs of the time. Within five days after the royal order for the sale, a letter was written by the sovereigns to Bishop Fonseca, suspending that order, until they could enquire into the cause for which the Indians had been made prisoners, and consult learned and pious theologians, whether their sale would be justifiable in the eyes of God *. Much difference of opinion took place among divines, on this important question; the queen eventually decided it according to the dictates of her own pure conscience and charitable heart. She ordered that the Indians should be sent back to their native country, and enjoined that the islanders should be conciliated by the gentlest means, instead of being treated with severity. Unfortunately her orders came too late to Hispaniola, to have the desired effect. The scenes

* Letter of the Sovereigns to Fonseca. Navarrete Colleccion de los Viages, I. 11., Doc, 92.

of warfare and violence, produced by the bad passions of the colonists and the vengeance of the natives, were not to be forgotten. Mutual distrust and rankling animosity had grown up between them, which no after exertions could eradicate.

CHAPTER IX.

ARRIVAL OF AGUADO AT ISABELLA. HIS ARROGANT CONDUCT. TEMPEST IN THE HARBOUR.

[1495.]

Juan Aguado set sail from Spain towards the end of August, with four caravels, well freighted with supplies of all kinds for the colony. Don Diego Columbus returned in this squadron to Hispaniola. He arrived at Isabella in the month of October, while the admiral was absent, occupied in re-establishing the tranquillity of the interior. Aguado, as has already been shewn, was under obligations to Columbus, who had distinguished him from among his companions, and had recommended him to the favour of the sovereigns. He was, however, one of those weak men, whose heads are turned by the least elevation. Puffed up by a little temporary power, he lost sight, not merely of the respect and gratitude due to Columbus, but of the nature and extent of his own commission. Instead of acting as an agent employed

to collect information, he assumed a tone of authority, as though the reins of government had been transferred into his hands. He interfered in public affairs; ordered various persons to be arrested; called to account the officers employed by the admiral; and paid no respect to Don Bartholomew Columbus, who remained in command during the absence of his brother. The Adelantado, astonished at this presumption, demanded a sight of the commission under which he acted; but Aguado treated him with great haughtiness, replying that he would show it only to the admiral. On second thoughts, however, lest there should be doubts in the public mind of his right to interfere in the affairs of the colony, he ordered his letter of credence from the sovereigns to be pompously proclaimed by sound of trumpet. It was brief but comprehensive, to the following purport:—"Cavaliers, Esquires, and other persons, who by our orders are in the Indies, we send to you Juan Aguado, our groom of the chambers, who will speak to you on our part. We command you to give him faith and credit."

The report now circulated, that the downfall of

Columbus and his family was at hand, and that an auditor had arrived, empowered to hear and to redress the grievances of the public. This rumour originated with Aguado himself, who threw out menaces of rigid investigations and signal punishments. It was a time of jubilee for offenders. Every culprit started up into an accuser; every one, who by negligence or crime had incurred the wholesome penalties of the laws, was loud in his clamours against the oppression of Columbus. There were ills enough in the colony, some incident to its situation, others produced by the misdeeds of the colonists—all were ascribed to the mal-administration of the admiral. He was made responsible alike for the evils produced by others, and for his own stern remedies. All the old complaints were reiterated against him and his brothers, and the usual and illiberal cause given for their oppressions, that they were foreigners, who sought merely their own interest and aggrandisement, at the expense of the sufferings and the indignities of Spaniards.

Destitute of discrimination to perceive what was true and what false in these complaints, and

anxious only to condemn, Aguado saw in every thing conclusive testimony of the culpability of Columbus. He intimated, and perhaps thought, that the admiral was keeping at a distance from Isabella, through fear of encountering his investigations. In the fulness of his presumption, he even set out with a body of horse to go in quest of him. A vain and weak man in power is prone to employ satellites of his own description. The arrogant and boasting followers of Aguado, where-ever they went, spread rumours among the natives of the might and importance of their chief, and of the punishment he intended to inflict upon Columbus. In a little while the report circulated through the island, that a new admiral had arrived to administer the government, and that the former governor was to be put to death.

The news of the arrival and of the insolent conduct of Aguado had reached Columbus in the interior of the island; he immediately hastened to Isabella to give him a meeting. Aguado, hearing of his approach, also returned there. As every one knew the lofty spirit of Columbus, his high sense of his services, and his jealous maintenance

of his official dignity, a violent explosion was anticipated at the impending interview. Aguado also expected something of the kind, but, secure in his royal letter of credence, he looked forward with the ignorant audacity of a little mind to the result. The sequel showed how difficult it is for petty spirits to anticipate the conduct of a man like Columbus in a difficult situation. His natural heat and impetuosity had been subdued by a life of trials; he had learned to bring his passions into subjection to his judgment; he had too true an estimate of his own dignity to enter into a contest with a shallow boaster like Aguado: above all, he had a profound reverence for the authority of his sovereigns; for in his enthusiastic spirit, prone to deep feelings of reverence, his loyalty was inferior only to his religion. He received Aguado, therefore, with the most grave and punctilious courtesy. The latter repeated his own ostentatious ceremonial, ordering that the letter of credence should be again proclaimed by sound of trumpet in presence of the populace. Columbus listened to it with solemn deference, and assured Aguado of his readiness to

acquiesce in whatever might be the pleasure of his sovereigns.

This unexpected moderation, while it astonished the beholders, foiled and disappointed Aguado. He had come prepared for a scene of altercation, and had hoped that Columbus, in the heat and impatience of the moment, would have said or done something that might have been construed into disrespect for the authority of the sovereigns. He endeavoured, in fact, some months afterwards, to procure from the public notaries present, a prejudicial statement of the interview; but the deference of the admiral for the royal letter of credence had been too marked to be disputed; and all the testimonials were highly in his favour *. Aguado continued to intermeddle in public affairs, and the respect and forbearance with which he was uniformly treated by Columbus, and the mildness of the latter in all his measures to appease the discontents of the colony, were regarded as proofs of his loss of moral courage. He was looked upon as a declining man, and Aguado hailed as the lord of the ascendant. Every dastard spirit who had

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., cap. 18.

any lurking ill-will, any real or imaginary cause of complaint, now hastened to give it utterance; perceiving that, in gratifying his malice, he was promoting his interest, and that in vilifying the admiral he was gaining the friendship of Aguado.

The poor Indians, too, harassed by the domination of the white men, rejoiced in the prospect of a change of rulers, vainly hoping that it might produce a mitigation of their sufferings. Many of the caciques who had promised allegiance to the admiral after their defeat in the Vega, now assembled at the house of Manacoatex, the brother of Caonabo, near the river Yagui, where they joined in a formal complaint against Columbus, whom they considered the cause of all the evils which had sprung from the disobedience and the vices of his followers.

Aguado now considered the great object of his mission fulfilled. He had collected information sufficient, as he thought, to ensure the ruin of the admiral and his brothers, and prepared to return to Spain. Columbus resolved to do the same. He felt that it was time to appear at court, and dispel the cloud of calumny that was gathering against

him. He had active enemies, of standing and influence, who were seeking every occasion to throw discredit upon himself and his enterprises. Stranger and foreigner as he was, he had no active friends at court to oppose their machinations. He feared that they might eventually produce an effect upon the royal mind, fatal to the progress of discovery: he was anxious to return, therefore, and explain the real causes of the repeated disappointments with respect to profits anticipated from his enterprises. It is not one of the least singular traits in his history, that after having been so many years in persuading mankind that there was a new world to be discovered, he had almost equal trouble in proving to them the advantage of its discovery.

When the ships were ready to depart, a terrible storm swept the island. It was one of those awful whirlwinds which occasionally rage within the tropics, and which were called by the Indians "furicanes," or "uricans," a name which they still retain with trifling variation. About mid-day a furious wind sprang up from the east, driving before it dense volumes of cloud and vapour.

Encountering another tempest of wind from the west, it appeared as if a violent conflict ensued. The clouds were rent by incessant flashes, or rather streams of lightning. At one time they were piled up high in the sky, at another they descended to the earth, filling the air with a baleful darkness more impenetrable than the obscurity of midnight. Wherever the whirlwind passed, whole tracts of forests were shivered and stripped of their leaves and branches: those of gigantic size, which resisted the blast, were torn up by the roots, and hurled to a great distance. Groves were torn from the mountain precipices; and vast masses of earth and rock precipitated into the valleys with terrific noise, choking the course of rivers. The fearful sounds in the air and on the earth, the pealing thunder, the vivid lightning, the howling of the wind, the crash of falling trees and rocks, filled every one with affright; and many thought that the end of the world was at hand. Some fled to caverns for safety, for their frail houses were blown down, and the air was filled with the trunks and branches of trees, and even with fragments of rocks, carried along by the fury of

the tempest. When the hurricane reached the harbour, it whirled the ships round as they lay at anchor, snapped their cables, and sank three of them to the bottom, with all who were on board: others were driven about, dashed against each other, and tossed mere wrecks upon the shore by the swelling surges of the sea, which in some places rolled for three or four miles upon the land. The tempest lasted for three hours. When it had passed away, and the sun again appeared, the Indians regarded each other in mute astonishment and dismay. Never in their memory, nor in the traditions of their ancestors, had their island been visited by such a tremendous storm. They believed that the Deity had sent this fearful ruin to punish the cruelties and crimes of the white men; and declared that this people had moved the very air, the water, and the earth, to disturb their tranquil life, and to desolate their island*.

* Ramusio, t. viii., p. 7. Peter Martyr, decad. 1, l. 4.

CHAPTER X.

DISCOVERY OF THE MINES OF HAYNA.

[1496.]

In the recent hurricane, the four caravels of Aguado were destroyed, together with two others which were in the harbour. The only vessel which survived was the Niña, and that in a very shattered condition. Columbus gave orders to have her immediately repaired, and another caravel constructed out of the wreck of those which had been destroyed. While waiting until they should be ready for sea, he was cheered by tidings of rich mines in the interior of the island, the discovery of which is attributed to an incident of a somewhat romantic nature *. A young Arragonian, named Miguel Diaz, in the service of the Adelantado, having a quarrel with another Spaniard, fought with him, and wounded him dangerously. Fearful of the consequences, he fled from the settlement, accompanied by five or six comrades, who

* Oviedo, Cronica de los Indias, l. ii., c. 13.

had either been engaged in the affray or were personally attached to him. Wandering about the island, they at length came to an Indian village on the southern coast, near the mouth of the river Ozema, where the city of San Domingo is at present situated. They were received with kindness by the natives, and resided for some time among them. The village was governed by a female cacique, who soon conceived a strong attachment for the young Arragonian. Diaz was not insensible to her tenderness, a connexion was formed between them, and they lived for some time very happily together.

The recollection of his country and his friends began at length to steal upon the thoughts of the young Spaniard. It was a melancholy lot to be exiled from civilized life, and an outcast from among his countrymen. He longed to return to the settlement, but dreaded the punishment that awaited him, from the austere justice of the Adelantado. His Indian bride, observing him frequently melancholy and lost in thought, penetrated into the cause with the quick intelligence of female affection. Fearful that he would abandon her, and once more

return to his countrymen, she endeavoured to devise some means of drawing the Spaniards to that part of the island. Knowing that gold was the great attraction of white men, she informed Diaz of certain rich mines in the neighbourhood. She urged him to persuade his countrymen to abandon the comparatively sterile and unhealthy vicinity of Isabella, and to settle upon the fertile banks of the Ozema, promising that they should be received with the utmost kindness and hospitality by her nation.

Diaz was struck with the suggestion. He made particular inquiries about the mines, and was convinced that they abounded in gold. He noticed the superior fruitfulness and beauty of the country, the excellence of the river, and the security of the harbour at its entrance. He flattered himself that the communication of such valuable intelligence would make his peace at Isabella, and obtain his pardon from the Adelantado. Full of these hopes, he procured guides from among the natives, and taking a temporary leave of his Indian bride, set out with his comrades through the wilderness for the settlement, which was about fifty leagues dis-

tant. Arriving there secretly, he learnt to his great joy, that the man whom he had wounded had recovered. He now presented himself boldly before the Adelantado, relying that his tidings would earn his forgiveness. He was not mistaken. No news could have come more opportunely. The admiral had been anxious to remove the settlement to a more healthy and advantageous situation. He was desirous also of carrying home some conclusive proof of the riches of the island, as the most effectual means of silencing the cavils of his enemies. If the representations of Miguel Diaz were correct, here was a means of effecting both these purposes. Measures were immediately taken to ascertain the truth. The Adelantado set forth in person to visit the river Ozema, accompanied by Miguel Diaz, Francisco de Garay, and the Indian guides, and attended by a number of men well armed. They proceeded from Isabella to Magdalena, from thence across the royal Vega to the fortress of Conception. Continuing on to the south, they came to a range of mountains, which they traversed by a defile two leagues in length, and descended into another beautiful

plain, which was called Bonao. From hence, proceeding for some distance, they came to a great river called Hayna, running through a fertile country, all the streams of which abounded in gold. On the western bank of this river, and about eight leagues from its mouth, they found gold in greater quantities and in larger particles than had yet been met with in any part of the island, not even excepting the province of Cibao. They made experiments in various places within the compass of six miles, and always with success. The soil seemed to be generally impregnated with that metal, so that a common labourer, with little trouble, might find the amount of three drachms in the course of a day*. In several places they observed deep excavations in the form of pits, which looked as if the mines had been worked in ancient times; a circumstance which caused much speculation among the Spaniards, the natives having no idea of mining, but contenting themselves with the particles found on the surface of the soil, or in the beds of the rivers.

The Indians of the neighbourhood received the

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. ii., c. 18. Peter Martyr, dec. 1, l. iv.

white men with their promised friendship, and in every respect the representations of Miguel Diaz were fully justified. He was not only pardoned, but received into great favour, and was subsequently employed in various capacities in the island, in all which he acquitted himself with great fidelity. He kept his faith with his Indian bride, by whom, according to Oviedo, he had two children. Charlevoix supposes that they were regularly married, as the female cacique appears to have been baptized, being always mentioned by the Christian name of Catalina*.

When the Adelantado returned with this favourable report, and with the specimens of ore which he had collected, the anxious heart of the admiral was greatly elated. He gave orders that a fortress should be immediately erected on the banks of the Hayna, in the vicinity of the mines, and that they should be diligently worked. The fancied traces of ancient excavations gave rise to one of his usual veins of golden conjectures. He had already surmised that Hispaniola might be the

* Oviedo, Cronica de Ind., l. ii., c. 13. Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, l. ii., p. 146.

ancient Ophir. He now flattered himself that he had discovered the identical mines, from whence King Solomon had procured his great supplies of gold for the building of the temple of Jerusalem. He supposed that his ships must have sailed by the gulf of Persia, and round Trapoban to this island *, which, according to his idea, lay opposite to the extreme end of Asia, for such he firmly believed the island of Cuba.

It is probable that Columbus gave free licence to his imagination in these conjectures, which tended to throw a splendour about his enterprises, and to revive the languishing interest of the public. Granting, however, the correctness of his opinion, that he was in the vicinity of Asia, an error by no means surprising in the imperfect state of geographical knowledge, all his consequent suppositions were far from extravagant. The ancient Ophir was believed to lie somewhere in the East, but its situation was a matter of controversy among the learned, and remains one of those conjectural questions about which too much has been written for it ever to be satisfactorily decided.

* Peter Martyr, decad. 1, lib. iv.

BOOK IX.

CHAPTER I.

RETURN OF COLUMBUS TO SPAIN WITH AGUADO.

[1496.]

THE new caravel, the Santa Cruz, being finished, and the Niña repaired, Columbus made every arrangement for immediate departure, anxious to be freed from the growing arrogance of Aguado, and to relieve the colony from a crew of factious and discontented men. He appointed his brother, Don Bartholomew, to the command of the island, with the title, which he had already given him, of Adelantado: in case of his death he was to be succeeded by his brother Don Diego. On the 10th of March the two caravels set sail for Spain, in one of which Columbus embarked, and in the other Aguado. In consequence of the orders of the sovereigns, all those who could be spared from the island, and some who had wives and relations

in Spain whom they wished to visit, returned in these caravels, which were crowded with two hundred and twenty-five passengers, the sick, the idle, the profligate, and factious of the colony. Never did a more miserable and disappointed crew return from a land of promise.

There were thirty Indians also on board of the caravels, among whom were the once redoubtable cacique Caonabo, one of his brothers, and a nephew. The curate of Los Palacios observes that Columbus had promised the cacique and his brother to restore them to their country and their power, after he had taken them to visit the King and Queen of Castile *. It is probable that he hoped by a display of the wonders of Spain, the grandeur and might of its sovereigns, and by a course of kind treatment, to conquer their enmity to the Spaniards, and convert them into important instruments towards obtaining a secure and peaceable dominion over the island. Caonabo, however, was of that proud nature, of wild but vigorous growth, which can never be tamed. He remained a moody and dejected captive. He

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 131.

had too much intelligence not to perceive that his power was for ever blasted, but he retained his haughtiness, even in the midst of his despair.

Being, as yet, but little experienced in the navigation of these seas, Columbus, instead of working up to the northward, so as to fall in with the tract of westerly winds, took an easterly course on leaving the island. The consequence was, that almost the whole of his voyage was a toilsome and tedious struggle against the trade winds and calms which prevail between the tropics. On the 6th of April he found himself still in the vicinity of the Caribbee islands, with his crews fatigued and sickly, and his provisions rapidly diminishing. He bore away to the southward, therefore, to touch at the most important of those islands, in search of supplies.

On Saturday the 9th, he anchored at Marigalante, from whence, on the following day, he made sail for Guadaloupe. It was contrary to the custom of Columbus to weigh anchor on Sunday when in port, but the people murmured, and observed, that when in quest of food, it was no time to stand on scruples as to holidays *.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 62.

Anchoring off the island of Guadaloupe, the boat was sent on shore well armed, to guard against any assault of these warlike people. Before it could reach the land, a large number of resolute females issued from the woods, armed with bows and arrows, and decorated with tufts of feathers, preparing to oppose any descent upon their shores. As the sea was somewhat rough, and a surf broke upon the beach, the boats remained at a distance, and two of the Indians from Hispaniola swam to shore. Having explained to these Amazons that the Spaniards only sought provisions, in exchange for which they would give articles of great value, the women referred them to their husbands, who were at the northern end of the island. As the boats proceeded thither, numbers of the natives were seen on the beach, who manifested great ferocity, shouting, and yelling, and discharging flights of arrows, which, however, fell far short in the water. Seeing the boats approach the land, they hid themselves in the adjacent forest, and rushed forth with hideous cries as the Spaniards were landing. A discharge of fire-arms drove them terrified to the woods and mountains, and

the boats met with no further opposition. Entering the deserted habitations, the Spaniards began to plunder and destroy, contrary to the invariable injunctions of the admiral. Among other articles found in these houses were honey and wax, which Herrera supposes had been brought from Terra Firma, as these roving people collected the productions of distant regions in the course of their expeditions. Fernando Columbus mentions likewise that there were hatchets of iron in their houses: these, however, must have been made of a species of hard and heavy stone, already mentioned, which resembled iron; or they must have been procured from places which the Spaniards had previously visited, as it is fully admitted that no iron was in use among the natives prior to the discovery. The sailors also reported that in one of the houses they found the arm of a man roasting on a spit before a fire—another of those facts repugnant to humanity, and requiring more solid authority to be credited: the sailors had committed wanton devastations in these dwellings, and may have sought a pretext with which to justify their maraudings to the admiral.

While some of the people were employed on shore, getting wood and water, and making cassava bread, Columbus despatched forty men, well armed, to explore the interior of the island. They returned on the following day with ten women and three boys whom they had captured. The women were of large and powerful form, yet of great agility. They were naked, and wore their hair long and loose-flowing upon their shoulders ; some decorated their heads with plumes of various colours. Among them was the wife of a cacique, a woman of great strength and proud spirit. On the approach of the Spaniards, she had fled with an agility which soon left all her pursuers far behind, excepting a native of the Canary islands remarkable for swiftness of foot. She would have escaped even from him, but, perceiving that he was alone, and far from his companions, she turned suddenly upon him, seized him with astonishing force, and would have strangled him, had not the Spaniards arrived and taken her entangled like a hawk with her prey. The warlike spirit of these Carib women, and the circumstance of finding them in armed bands, defending their shores,

during the absence of their husbands, led Columbus repeatedly into the erroneous idea, that certain of these islands were inhabited entirely by women; an error for which, as has already been observed, he was prepared by the stories of Marco Polo concerning an island of Amazons near the coast of Asia.

Having remained several days at the island, and prepared three weeks' supply of bread, Columbus prepared to make sail. As Guadaloupe was the most important of the Caribbee Islands, and in a manner the portal or entrance to all the rest, he wished to secure the friendship of the inhabitants. He dismissed, therefore, all the prisoners, with many presents, to compensate for the spoil and injury which had been done. The female cacique, however, declined going on shore, preferring to remain and accompany the natives of Hispaniola who were on board, keeping with her also a young daughter. She had conceived a passion for Caonabo, having found out that he was a native of the Caribbee Islands. His character and story, gathered from the other Indians, had won

the sympathy and admiration of this intrepid woman *.

Leaving Guadaloupe on the 20th of April, and keeping in about the twenty-second degree of latitude, the caravels again worked their way against the whole current of the trade-winds, insomuch that, on the 20th of May, after a month of great fatigue and toil, they had yet a great part of their voyage to make. The provisions were already so reduced, that Columbus had to put every one on a daily allowance of six ounces of bread and a pint and a half of water: as they advanced, the scarcity grew more and more severe, and was rendered more appalling from the uncertainty which prevailed on board the vessels as to their situation. There were several pilots in the caravels; but being chiefly accustomed to the navigation of the Mediterranean, or the Atlantic coasts, they were utterly confounded, and lost all reckoning when traversing the broad ocean. Every one had a separate opinion, and none heeded the directions of the admiral. By the beginning of June there was an absolute famine on board of the ships. In the ex-

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 63.

tremity of their sufferings, while death stared them in the face, it was proposed by some of the Spaniards, as a desperate alternative, that they should kill and eat their Indian prisoners; others suggested that they should throw them into the sea, as so many expensive and useless mouths. Nothing but the absolute authority of Columbus prevented this last counsel from being adopted. He represented that the Indians were their fellow-beings, some of them Christians like themselves, and all entitled to similar treatment. He exhorted them to a little patience, assuring them that they would soon make land, for that, according to his reckoning, they were not far from Cape St. Vincent. At this all scoffed, for they believed themselves yet far from their desired haven; some affirming that they were in the English channel, others that they were approaching Gallicia; when Columbus, therefore, confident in his opinion, ordered that sail should be taken in at night, lest they should come upon the land in the dark, there was a general murmur; the men exclaiming that it was better to be cast on shore, than to starve at sea. The next morning, however, to their great joy, they came in

sight of the very land which Columbus had predicted. From this time, he was regarded by the seamen as almost oracular in matters of navigation, and as deeply versed in the mysteries of the ocean*.

On the 11th of June, the vessels anchored in the bay of Cadiz, after a weary voyage of about eight months. In the course of this voyage, the unfortunate Caonabo expired. It is by the mere casual mention of contemporary writers, that we have any notice of this circumstance, which appears to have been passed over as a matter of but little moment. He maintained his haughty nature to the last, for his death is principally ascribed to the morbid melancholy of a proud but broken spirit †. He was an extraordinary character in savage life. From being a simple Carib warrior, he had risen, by his enterprise and courage, to be the most powerful cacique, and the ruling potentate of the populous island of Hayti. He was

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 63.

† Cura de los Palacios, cap. 131. Peter Martyr, decad. 1, lib. iv. Some have affirmed that Caonabo perished in one of the caravels which foundered in the harbour of Isabella during the hurricane, but the united testimony of the curate of Los Palacios, Peter Martyr, and Fernando Columbus prove that he sailed with the admiral in his return voyage.

the only chieftain that appeared to have had sagacity sufficient to foresee the fatal effects of Spanish ascendency, or military talent to combine any resistance to its inroads. Had his warriors been of his own intrepid nature, the war which he raised would have been formidable in the extreme. His fate furnishes, on a narrow scale, a lesson to human greatness. When the Spaniards first arrived on the coast of Hayti, their imaginations were inflamed with rumours of a magnificent prince in the interior, the lord of the Golden House, the sovereign of the mines of Cibao, who reigned in splendid state among the mountains; but a short time had elapsed, and he was a naked and dejected prisoner on the deck of one of their caravels, with none but one of his own wild native heroines to sympathize in his misfortunes. All his importance vanished with his freedom; scarce any mention is made of him during his captivity, and with innate qualities of a high and heroic nature, he perished with the obscurity of one of the vulgar.

CHAPTER II.

DECLINE OF THE POPULARITY OF COLUMBUS IN SPAIN. HIS RECEPTION BY THE SOVEREIGNS AT BURGOS. HE PROPOSES A THIRD VOYAGE.

Envy and malice had been but too successful in undermining the popularity of Columbus. It is impossible to keep up a state of excitement for any length of time, even by miracles. The world, at first, is prompt and lavish in its admiration, but soon grows cool, distrusts its late enthusiasm, and fancies it has been defrauded of what it bestowed with such prodigality. It is then that the caviller who had been silenced by the general applause, puts in his insidious suggestion, detracts from the merit of the declining favourite, and succeeds in rendering him an object of doubt and censure, if not of absolute aversion. In three short years, the public had become familiar with the stupendous wonder of a newly-discovered world, and was now open to every insinuation derogatory to the fame of the discoverer and his enterprises.

The circumstances which attended the present arrival of Columbus were little calculated to diminish the growing prejudices of the populace. When the motley crowd of mariners and adventurers who had embarked with such sanguine and extravagant expectations disembarked from the vessels, instead of a joyous crew, bounding on shore, flushed with success, and laden with the spoils of the golden Indies, a feeble train of wretched men crawled forth, emaciated by the diseases of the colony and the hardships of the voyage, who carried in their yellow countenances, says an old writer, a mockery of that gold which had been the object of their search, and who had nothing to relate of the New World, but tales of sickness, poverty, and disappointment.

Columbus endeavoured, as much as possible, to counteract these unfavourable appearances, and to revive the languishing enthusiasm of the public. He dwelt upon the importance of his recent discoveries along the coast of Cuba, where, as he supposed, he had arrived nearly to the Aurea Chersonesus of the ancients, bordering on some of the richest provinces of Asia. And,

above all, he boasted of his discovery of the abundant mines in the south side of Hispaniola, which he persuaded himself were those of the ancient Ophir. The public listened to these accounts with sneering incredulity; or if for a moment a little excitement was occasioned, it was quickly destroyed by gloomy pictures drawn by disappointed adventurers.

In the harbour of Cadiz, Columbus found three caravels, commanded by Pedro Alonzo Niño, on the point of sailing with supplies for the colony. Nearly a year had elapsed without any relief of the kind, four caravels which had sailed in the preceding January having been lost on the coast of the Peninsula *. Having read the royal letters and despatches of which Niño was the bearer, and being informed of the wishes of the sovereigns, as well as the state of the public mind, Columbus wrote by this opportunity, urging the Adelantado to endeavour, by every means, to bring the island into a peaceful and productive state, appeasing all discontents and commotions, and seizing and sending to Spain all caciques, or their

* Muños, Hist. N. Mundo, l. vi.

subjects, who should be concerned in the deaths of any of the colonists. He recommended the most unremitting diligence in exploring and working the mines recently discovered on the river Hayna, and that a place should be chosen in the neighbourhood, and a sea-port founded. Pedro Alonzo Niño set sail with the three caravels on the 17th of June.

Tidings of the arrival of Columbus having reached the sovereigns, he received a gracious letter from them, dated at Almazen, 12th July, 1496; congratulating him on his safe return, and inviting him to court when he should have recovered from the fatigues of his voyage. The kind terms in which this letter was couched were calculated to reassure the heart of Columbus, who ever since the mission of the arrogant Aguado, had considered himself out of favour with the sovereigns, and fallen into disgrace. As a proof of the dejection of his spirits, we are told that when he made his appearance this time in Spain, he was clad in a humble garb, resembling in form and colour the habit of a Franciscan monk, simply

girded with a cord *, and that he had suffered his beard to grow like the brethren of that order †. This was probably in fulfilment of some penitential vow which he had made in a moment of danger or despondency,—a custom prevalent in those days, and frequently observed by Columbus. It betokened, however, much humility and depression of spirit, and afforded a striking contrast to his appearance on his former triumphant return. He was doomed, in fact, to yield repeated examples of the reverses to which those are subject who have once launched from the safe shores of obscurity on the fluctuating waves of popular opinion. However indifferent Columbus might be to his own personal appearance, he was anxious to keep alive the interest in his discoveries, fearing continually that the indifference that was awakening towards him might impede their accomplishment. On his way to Burgos, therefore, where the sovereigns were expected, he made a studious display of the curiosities and treasures which he had brought from the New World.

* Cura de los Palacios, cap. 131. † Oviedo, lib. ii., c. 13.

Among these were collars, bracelets, amulets, and coronets of gold, the spoils of various caciques, and which were considered as trophies won from barbaric princes of the rich coasts of Asia, or the islands of the Indian seas. It is a proof of the petty standard by which the sublime discovery of Columbus was already estimated, that he had to resort to this management to dazzle the gross perceptions of the multitude by the mere glare of gold.

He carried with him several Indians also, decorated after their savage fashion, and glittering with golden ornaments: among these were the brother and nephew of Caonabo, the former about thirty years of age, the latter only ten. They were brought merely to visit the king and queen, that they might be impressed with an idea of the grandeur and power of the Spanish sovereigns, after which they were to be restored in safety to their country. Whenever they passed through any principal place, Columbus put a massive collar and chain of gold upon the brother of Caonabo, as being cacique of the golden country of Cibao. The curate of Los Palacios, who entertained

the discoverer and his Indian captives for several days in his house, says that he had this chain of gold in his hands, and that it weighed six hundred castellanos*. The worthy curate likewise makes mention of various Indian masks and images of wood or cotton, wrought with fantastic faces of animals, all of which he supposed were representations of the devil, who he concludes must be the object of adoration of these islanders †.

The reception of Columbus by the sovereigns was different from what he had anticipated; for he was treated with distinguished favour, nor was any mention made either of the complaints of Margarite and Boyle, or the judicial enquiries conducted by Aguado. However these may have had a transient effect on the minds of the sovereigns, they were too conscious of the great deserts of Columbus, and the extraordinary difficulties of his situation, not to tolerate what they may have considered errors on his part.

* Equivalent to the value of three thousand one hundred and ninety-five dollars of the present time.

* Cura de los Palacios, chap. 131.

Encouraged by the favourable countenance he experienced, and the interest with which the sovereigns listened to his account of his recent voyage along the coast of Cuba, and the discovery of the mines of Hayna, which he failed not to represent as the Ophir of the ancients ; Columbus now proposed a further enterprise, by which he promised to make yet more extensive discoveries, and to annex Terra Firma to their dominions, for he supposed Cuba to be but a part of a rich and splendid continent. For this purpose he asked eight ships ; two to be despatched to the island of Hispaniola with supplies, the remaining six to be put under his command for a voyage of discover. The sovereigns readily promised to comply with his request, and were probably sincere in their intentions to do so, but in the performance of their request Columbus was doomed to meet with intolerable delay; partly in consequence of the operation of public events, partly in consequence of the intrigues of men of office, the two great influences which are continually diverting and defeating the designs of princes.

The resources of Spain were, at this moment,

tasked to the utmost by the ambition of Ferdinand, who lavished all his revenues in warlike expenses and in subsidies. While maintaining a contest of deep and artful policy with France, with the ultimate aim of grasping the sceptre of Naples, he was laying the foundation of a wide and powerful connexion by the marriages of the royal children, who were now maturing in years. At this time arose that family alliance, which afterwards consolidated such an immense empire under his grandson and successor, Charles V.

While a large army was maintained in Italy, under Gonsalvo of Cordova, to assist the king of Naples in recovering his throne, of which he had been suddenly dispossessed by Charles VIII. of France, other armies were required on the frontiers of Spain. Menaced with a French invasion, squadrons also had to be employed, for the safeguard of the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of Spain, while a magnificent armada of upwards of a hundred ships, having on board twenty thousand persons, many of them of the first nobility, was despatched to convoy the Princess Juana to Flanders, to be married to Philip, Archduke of

Austria, and to bring back his sister Margarita, the destined bride of Prince Juan.

These widely-extended operations, both of war and amity, put all the land and naval forces into requisition. They drained the royal treasury, and engrossed the thoughts of the sovereigns, obliging them also to journey from place to place in their dominions. With such cares of an immediate and important nature pressing upon their minds, the enterprizes of Columbus were easily neglected or postponed. They had hitherto been sources of expense instead of profit; and there were artful councillors ever ready to whisper in the royal ear, that they were likely to continue so. What, in the ambitious eyes of Ferdinand, was the acquisition of a number of wild, uncultivated, and distant islands, to that of the brilliant domain of Naples; or the intercourse with naked and barbaric princes, to that of an alliance with the most potent sovereigns of Christendom? Columbus had the mortification, therefore, to see armies levied and squadrons employed in idle contests about a little point of territory in Europe, and a vast armada of upwards of a hundred sail des-

tined to the ostentatious service of convoying a royal bride; while he vainly solicited a few caravels to prosecute his discovery of a world.

At length, in the autumn, six millions of maravedies * were ordered to be advanced to Columbus for the equipment of his promised squadron. Just as the sum was about to be delivered, a letter was received from Pedro Alonzo Niño, who had arrived at Cadiz with his three cararels, on his return from the island of Hispaniola. Instead of proceeding to court in person, or forwarding the despatches of the Adelantado, he had gone to visit his family at Huelva, taking the despatches with him, and merely writing in a vaunting style, that he had a great amount of gold on board of his ships †.

This was triumphant intelligence to Columbus, who immediately concluded that the new mines were in operation, and the treasures of Ophir about to be realized. The letter of Niño, however, was fated to have a most injurious effect on his concerns.

* Equivalent to 86,956 dollars of the present day.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i., c. 123. MS.

The king at that moment was in immediate want of money, to repair the fortress of Salza, in Roussillon, which had been sacked by the French; the six millions of maravadies, about to be advanced to Columbus, were forthwith appropriated to patch up the shattered castle, and an order was given for the amount to be paid out of the gold brought by Niño. It was not until the end of December, when Niño arrived at court, and delivered the despatches of the Adelantado, that his boast of gold was discovered to be a mere figure of speech, and that his cavarels were, in fact, freighted with Indian prisoners, from the sale of whom the vaunted gold was to arise.

It is difficult to describe the vexatious effects of this absurd hyperbole. The hopes of Columbus, of great and immediate profit from the mines, were suddenly cast down; the zeal of his few advocates was cooled; an air of empty exaggeration was given to his enterprises; and his enemies pointed with scorn and ridicule to the wretched cargoes of the cavarels, as the boasted treasures of the New World. The report brought by Niño and his crew, represented the colony as

in a disastrous condition, and the despatches of the Adelantado pointed out the importance of immediate supplies; but in proportion as the necessity of the case was urgent, the measure of relief was scanty. All the unfavourable representations that had been hitherto made seemed corroborated, and the invidious cry of "great cost and little gain" was revived by those politicians of petty sagacity and microscopic eye, who, in all great undertakings, can discern the immediate expense, without having scope of vision to embrace the future profit.

CHAPTER III.

PREPARATIONS FOR A THIRD VOYAGE. DISAPPOINTMENTS AND DELAYS.

[1497.]

It was not until the following spring of 1497, that the concerns of Columbus and of the New World began to receive serious attention from the sovereigns. The fleet had returned from Flanders with the Princess Margarita of Austria. Her nuptials with Prince Juan, the heir-apparent, had been celebrated at Burgos, the capital of Old Castile, with extraordinary splendour. All the grandees, the dignitaries, and chivalry of Spain, together with ambassadors from the principal potentates of Christendom, were assembled on the occasion. Burgos was for some time a scene of chivalrous pageant and courtly revel, and the whole kingdom celebrated with great rejoicings this powerful alliance, which seemed to ensure to the Spanish sovereigns a continuance of their extraordinary prosperity.

In the midst of these festivities, Isabella, whose maternal heart had recently been engrossed by the marriages of her children, now that she was relieved from these concerns of a tender and domestic nature, entered into the affairs of the New World with a spirit that shewed she was determined to place them upon a substantial foundation, as well as clearly to define the powers, and reward the services of Columbus. To her protecting zeal all the provisions in favour of Columbus must be attributed; for the king began to look coldly on him, and the royal councillors, who had most influence in the affairs of the Indies, were his enemies.

Various royal ordinances dated about this time manifest the generous and considerate disposition of the queen. The rights, privileges, and dignities granted to Columbus at Santa Fé, were again confirmed; a tract of land in Hispaniola, fifty leagues in length, and twenty-five in breadth, was offered to him with the title of duke or marquess. This, however, Columbus had the forbearance to decline; he observed that it would only increase the envy which was already so virulent against

him, and would cause new misrepresentations; as he should be accused of paying more attention to the settlement and improvement of his own possessions, than of any other part of the island *.

As the expenses of the expeditions had hitherto far exceeded the returns, Columbus had incurred debt rather than reaped profit from the share he had been permitted to take in them; he was relieved, therefore, from his obligation to bear an eighth part of the cost of the past enterprises, excepting the sum which he had advanced towards the first voyage; at the same time, however, he was not to claim any share of what had hitherto been brought from the island. For three ensuing years he was to be allowed an eighth of the gross proceeds of every voyage, and an additional tenth after the costs had been deducted. After the expiration of the three years, the original terms of agreement were to be resumed.

To gratify the honourable ambition of Columbus also, and to perpetuate in his family the distinction gained by his illustrious deeds, he was

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., cap. 123.

allowed the right of establishing a mayorazgo, or perpetual entail of his estates, so that they might always descend with his titles of nobility. This he shortly after exercised in a solemn testament which he executed at Seville in the early part of 1498. By this testament he devised his estates to his own male descendants, and on their failure to the male descendants of his brothers, and in default of male heirs to the females of his lineage.

The heir was always to bear the arms of the admiral, to seal with them, to sign with his signature, and in signing, never to use any other title than simply "The Admiral," whatever other titles might be given him by the king, and used by him on other occasions. Such was the noble pride with which he valued this title of his real greatness. In this testament he made ample provision for his brother, the Adelantado, his son Fernando, and his brother Don Diego the last of whom, he intimates, had a desire to enter into ecclesiastical life. He ordered that a tenth part of the revenues arising from the mayorazgo should be devoted to pious and charitable purposes, and in relieving all poor persons of his lineage. He made provisions

for the giving of marriage-portions to the poor females of his family. He ordered that a married person of his kindred who had been born in his native city of Genoa, should be maintained there in competence and respectability, by way of keeping a domicile for the family there; and he commanded whoever should inherit the mayorazgo, always to do every thing in his power for the honour, prosperity, and increase of the city of Genoa, provided it should not be contrary to the service of the church, and the interests of the Spanish crown. Among various other provisions in this will, he solemnly provides for his favourite scheme, the recovery of the holy sepulchre. He orders his son Diego, or whoever else may inherit his estate, to invest from time to time as much money as he can spare, in stock in the bank of St. George at Genoa, to form a permanent fund, with which he is to stand ready at any time to follow and serve the king in the conquest of Jerusalem. Or should the king not undertake such enterprise, then, when the funds have accumulated to sufficient amount, to set on foot a crusade at his own charge and risk, in hopes that, seeing his deter-

mination, the sovereigns may be induced either to adopt the undertaking, or to authorize him to pursue it in their name.

Besides this special undertaking for the catholic faith, he charges his heir that in case there should arise any schism in the church, or any violence that should menace its prosperity, to throw himself at the feet of the pope, and devote his person and property to defend the church from all insult and spoliation. Next to the service of God, he enjoins loyalty to the throne, commanding him at all times to stand ready to serve the sovereigns and their heirs, faithfully and zealously, even to the loss of life and estate. To ensure the constant remembrance of this testament, he orders his heir that, before he confesses, he shall give it to his father confessor to read, who is to examine him upon his faithful fulfilment of its conditions.

As Columbus had felt aggrieved by the general license granted in April, 1495, to make discoveries in the New World, considering it as interfering with his prerogatives, a royal edict was issued on the 2nd of June, 1497, retracting whatever might be prejudicial to his interests, or to the previous

grants made him by the crown. "It never was our intention," said the sovereigns in their edict, "in any way to affect the rights of the said Don Christopher Columbus, nor to allow the conventions, privileges, and favours which we have granted to him to be encroached upon or violated; but, on the contrary, in consequence of the services which he has rendered us, we intend to confer still further favours on him." Such, there is every reason to believe, was the sincere intention of the magnanimous Isabella; but the stream of her royal bounty was poisoned or diverted by the base channels through which it flowed. The favour shewn to Columbus was extended likewise to his family. The titles and prerogatives of Adelantado with which he had invested his brother Don Bartholomew, had at first awakened the displeasure of the king, who jealously reserved all high dignities of the kind to be granted exclusively by the crown. By a royal letter, the office was now conferred upon Don Bartholomew, as if through spontaneous favour of the sovereigns, no allusion being made to his having previously enjoyed it.

While all these measures were taken for the immediate gratification of Columbus, others were adopted for the interests of the colony. Permission was granted him to take out three hundred and thirty persons in royal pay, of whom forty were to be esquires or gentlemen, one hundred foot soldiers, thirty sailors, thirty ship-boys, twenty miners, fifty husbandmen, ten gardeners, twenty mechanics of various kinds, and thirty females. He was subsequently permitted to increase the number, if he thought proper, to five hundred; but the additional individuals were to be paid out of the produce and merchandise of the colony. He was likewise authorized to grant lands to all such as were disposed to cultivate vineyards, orchards, sugar plantations, or other rural establishments, on condition that they should reside on the island for four years after such grant; and that all the brasil-wood and precious metals which might be found on their lands, should be reserved to the crown.

Nor were the interests of the unhappy natives forgotten by the compassionate heart of Isabella. In spite of the sophisms by which their subjection

and servitude were made matters of civil and divine right, and sanctioned by the political prelates of the day, Isabella always consented with the greatest reluctance to the slavery even of those who were taken in open warfare; while her utmost solicitude was exerted to protect the unoffending part of this helpless and devoted race. She ordered that the greatest care should be taken of their religious instruction, and the greatest leniency shown in collecting the tributes imposed upon them, with all possible indulgence to defalcators. In fact, the injunctions given with respect to the treatment both of Indians and Spaniards are the only indications, in the royal edicts, of any impression having been made by the complaints against Columbus of severity in his government. It was generally recommended by the sovereigns, that, whenever the public safety did not require stern measures, there should be manifested a disposition to lenity and easy rule.

When every intention was thus shewn on the part of the crown to despatch the expedition to the colony, unexpected difficulties arose on the part of the public. The charm was dispelled

which in the preceding voyage had made every adventurer crowd into the service of Columbus. An odium had been industriously thrown upon his enterprises; and his new-found world, instead of a region of wealth and wonder, was considered a land of poverty and disaster. There was a difficulty in procuring either ships or men for the voyage. To remedy the first of these deficiencies, one of those arbitrary orders was issued, so opposite to our present ideas of commercial policy, empowering the officers of the crown to press into the service whatever ships they might judge suitable for the purposed expedition, together with their masters and pilots; and to fix such price for their remuneration, as the officers should deem just and reasonable. To supply the want of voluntary recruits, a measure was adopted at the suggestion of Columbus*, which shews the desperate alternatives to which he was reduced by the great reaction of public sentiment. This was, to commute the sentences of criminals condemned to banishment, to the galleys, or to the mines, into transportation to the new settlements, where they were

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i., c. 112, MS.

to labour in the public service without pay. Those whose sentence was banishment for life, to be transported for ten years; those banished for a specific term, to be transported for half that time. A general pardon was published for all malefactors at large, who within a certain time should surrender themselves to the admiral, and embark for the colonies; those who had committed offences meriting death, to serve for two years, those whose misdeeds were of a lighter nature, to serve for one year *. Those only were excepted from this indulgence who had committed certain specific crimes, such as heresy, treason, coining, murder, &c. &c. This pernicious measure, calculated to poison the population of an infant community at its very source, was a fruitful cause of trouble to Columbus, and misery and detriment to the colony. It has been frequently adopted by various nations, whose superior experience should have taught them better, and has proved the bane of many a rising settlement.

It is assuredly as unnatural for a metropolis to

* Muños, lib. vi., § 19.

cast forth its crimes and vices upon its colonies, as it would be for a parent wilfully to ingraft disease upon his children: nor can it be matter of surprise, if the seeds of evil which are thus sown, should bring forth bitter retribution.

Notwithstanding all these violent expedients, there was still a ruinous delay in fitting out the proposed expedition. This is partly accounted for by changes which took place in the persons appointed to superintend the affairs of the Indies. These concerns had for a time been consigned to Antonio de Torres, in whose name, conjointly with that of Columbus, many of the official documents had been made out. In consequence of high and unreasonable demands on the part of Torres, he was removed from office, and Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Badajoz, re-instated. The papers had, therefore, to be made out anew, and fresh contracts formed. While these concerns were tardily attended to, the queen was suddenly overwhelmed with affliction by the death of her only son Prince Juan, whose nuptials had been celebrated with such splendour in the spring. It was the first of a series of domestic calamities

which assailed her affectionate heart, and overwhelmed her with affliction for the remainder of her days. In the midst of her distress, however, she still thought on Columbus. In consequence of his urgent representations of the misery to which the colony must be reduced, two ships were despatched in the beginning of 1498, under the command of Pedro Fernandez Coronel, freighted with supplies. The necessary funds were advanced by the queen herself, out of the funds intended to form the endowment of her daughter Isabella, then betrothed to Emanuel, King of Portugal. An instance of her kind feeling toward Columbus was also evinced in the time of her affliction: his two sons, Diego and Fernando, had been pages to the deceased prince; the queen now took them, in the same capacity, into her own service.

With all this zealous disposition on the part of the queen, Columbus still met with the most injurious and discouraging delays in preparing the six remaining vessels for his voyage. His cold-blooded enemy Fonseca, having the superintendence of Indian affairs, was enabled to impede and retard all his plans. The various petty officers

and agents employed in the concerns of the armament, were many of them dependants and minions of the bishop, and knew that they were gratifying him in annoying Columbus. They looked upon the latter as a man declining in popularity, who might be offended with impunity; they scrupled not, therefore, to throw all kinds of difficulties in his path, and to treat him occasionally with that arrogance which petty and ignoble men in place are prone to exercise.

It seems almost incredible at the present day that such important and glorious enterprises should have been subject to such despicable molestations. Columbus bore them all with silent indignation. He was a stranger in the land he was benefiting; he felt that the popular tide was setting against him, and that it was necessary to tolerate many present grievances for the sake of effecting his great purposes. So wearied and disheartened, however, did he become by the impediments artfully thrown in his way, and so disgusted by the prejudices of the fickle public, that he at one time thought of abandoning his discoveries altogether. He was chiefly induced to perse-

vere by his grateful attachment to the queen, and his desire to achieve something that might cheer and animate her under her afflictions. At length, after all kinds of irritating delays, the six vessels were fitted for sea, though it was impossible to conquer the popular repugnance to the service, sufficiently to enlist the allotted number of men. In addition to the persons in employ already enumerated, a physician, surgeon, and apothecary were likewise sent out for the relief of the colony, and several priests to replace Friar Boyle and certain of his discontented brethren; while a number of musicians was embarked by the admiral for the purpose of cheering and enlivening the spirits of the colonists.

The insolence which Columbus had suffered from the minions of Fonseca throughout this long protracted time of preparation, harassed him to the last moment of his sojourn in Spain, and followed him to the water's edge. Among the worthless hirelings who had annoyed him, the most noisy and presuming was one Ximeno de Breviesca, treasurer or accountant of Fonseca. He was not an old Christian, observes the vene-

rable Las Casas, by which it is to be understood that he was either a Jew or a Moor converted to the Catholic faith. He had an impudent countenance and an unbridled tongue, and, echoing the sentiments of his patron the bishop, had been loud in his abuse of the admiral and his enterprises. The very day when the squadron was on the point of weighing anchor, Columbus was assailed by the insolence of this Ximeno, either on the shore when about to embark, or on board of his ship where he had just entered. In the hurry of the moment he forgot his usual self-command; his indignation, hitherto repressed, suddenly burst forth; he struck the despicable minion to the ground and spurned him repeatedly with his foot, venting in this unguarded paroxysm the accumulated griefs and vexations which had long rankled in his mind*.

Nothing could demonstrate more strongly what Columbus had previously suffered from the machinations of unworthy men, than this transport of passion, so unusual in his well-governed temper. He deeply regretted it, and in a letter written some time afterwards to the sovereigns, he en-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 126, MS.

treated that it might not be allowed to injure him in their opinion, he being "absent, envied, and a stranger." The apprehensions evinced in this simple but affecting appeal were not ill-founded, for Las Casas attributes the humiliating measures shortly after adopted by the sovereigns towards Columbus, to the unfavourable impression produced by this affair. It had happened near at home, as it were, under the very eye of the sovereigns; it spoke, therefore, more quickly to their feelings than more important allegations from a distance. The personal castigation of a public officer was represented as a flagrant instance of the vindictive temper of Columbus, and a corroboration of the charges of cruelty and oppression sent from the colony. As Ximeno was a creature of the invidious Fonseca, the affair was represented to the sovereigns in the most odious point of view. Thus the generous intentions of princes, and the exalted services of their subjects, are apt to be defeated by the intervention of cold and crafty men in place. By his implacable hostility to Columbus, and the secret obstructions which he

threw in the way of the most illustrious of human enterprises, Fonseca has ensured perpetuity to his name, coupled with the contempt of every generous mind.

BOOK X.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS FROM SPAIN ON HIS THIRD VOYAGE. DISCOVERY OF TRINIDAD.

[1498.]

On the 30th of May, 1498, Columbus set sail from the port of San Lucar de Barrameda, with his squadron of six vessels, on his third voyage of discovery. The route he proposed to take was different from that pursued in his former voyages. He intended to depart from the Cape de Verde Islands, sailing to the south-west until he should come under the equinoctial line, then to steer directly westward with the favour of the trade winds, until he should arrive at land, or find himself in the longitude of Hispaniola. Various considerations had induced him to adopt this course. In his preceding voyage, when he coasted the southern side of Cuba, under the belief that it was the continent of Asia, he had observed

that it swept off toward the south. From this circumstance, and from information gathered among the natives of the Caribbee Islands, he was induced to believe, that a great tract of the main land lay to the south of the countries he had already discovered. King John II., of Portugal, appears to have entertained a similar idea; as Herrera records an opinion expressed by that monarch, that there was a continent in the southern ocean*. If this were the case, it was supposed by Columbus, that, in proportion as he approached the equator, and extended his discoveries to climates more and more under the torrid influence of the sun, he should find the productions of nature sublimated by its rays to more perfect and precious qualities. He was strengthened in this belief by a letter written to him at the command of the queen, by one Jayme Ferrer, an eminent and learned lapidary, who in the course of his trading for precious stones and metals had been in the Levant and in various parts of the East; had conversed with the mer-

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., c. 9.

chants of the remote parts of Asia and Africa, and the natives of India, Arabia, and Ethiopia, and was considered deeply versed in geography generally, but especially in the nature of those countries from whence the valuable merchandise in which he dealt was procured. In this letter Ferrer assured Columbus, that, according to his experience, the rarest objects of commerce, such as gold, precious stones, drugs, and spices, were chiefly to be found in the regions about the equinoctial line, where the inhabitants were black, or darkly coloured; and that until the admiral should arrive among people of such complexions, he did not think he would find those articles in great abundance *.

Columbus expected to find such people more to the south. He recollected that the natives of Hispaniola had spoken of black men who had once come to their island from the south and south-east, the heads of whose javelins were of a sort of metal which they called Guanin. They had given the admiral specimens of this metal, which on being assayed in Spain, proved to be a

* Navarrete Collec., t. ii., Document 68.

mixture of eighteen parts gold, six silver, and eight copper, a proof of valuable mines in the country from whence they came. Charlevoix conjectures that these black people may have come from the Canaries, or the western coast of Africa, and been driven by tempest to the shores of Hispaniola*. It is probable, however, that Columbus had been misinformed as to their colour, or had misunderstood his informants. It is difficult to believe that the natives of Africa or the Canaries, could have performed a voyage of such magnitude, in the frail and scantily provided barks they were accustomed to use.

It was to ascertain the truth of all these suppositions, and, if correct, to arrive at the favoured and opulent countries about the equator, inhabited by people of similar complexions with those of the Africans under the line, that Columbus in his present voyage to the New World took a course much further to the south than that which he had hitherto pursued.

Having heard that a French squadron was cruising off Cape St. Vincent, he stood to the

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Doming., l. iii., p. 162.

south-west after leaving St. Lucar, touching at the islands of Porto Santo and Madeira, where he remained a few days taking in wood and water and other supplies, and then continued his course to the Canary Islands. On the 19th of June, he arrived at Gomara, where there lay at anchor a French cruiser with two Spanish prizes. On seeing the squadron of Columbus standing into the harbour, the captain of the privateer put to sea in all haste, followed by his prizes; one of which in the hurry of the moment left part of her crew on shore, making sail with only four of her armament, and six Spanish prisoners. The admiral at first mistook them for merchant ships alarmed by his warlike appearance; when informed of the truth, however, he sent three of his vessels in pursuit, but they were too distant to be overtaken. The six Spaniards, however, on board of one of the prizes, seeing assistance at hand, rose on their captors, and the admiral's vessel coming up, the prize was retaken and brought back in triumph to the port. The admiral relinquished the ship to the captain, and gave up the prisoners to the governor of the

island, to be exchanged for six Spaniards carried off by the cruiser*.

Leaving Gomera on the 21st of June, Columbus divided his squadron off the island of Ferro: three of the ships he despatched direct for Hispaniola, to carry supplies to the colony. One of these ships was commanded by Alonzo Sanchez de Caravajal, native of Baeza, a man of much worth and intrepidity; the second by Pedro de Arana de Cordova, brother of Doña Beatrix de Henriquez, the mother of the admiral's second son Fernando. He was cousin also of the unfortunate officer who commanded the fortress of La Navidad at the time of the massacre. The third was commanded by Juan Antonio Columbus (or Columbo) a Genoese, related to the admiral, and a man of much judgment and capacity. These captains were alternately to have the command, and bear the signal light a week at a time. The admiral carefully pointed out their course. When they came in sight of Hispaniola, they were to steer for the south side, for the new port and town, which he supposed to be by this time esta-

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 65.

blished in the mouth of the Ozema, according to royal orders sent out by Coronel. With the three remaining vessels, the admiral prosecuted his voyage towards the Cape de Verde Islands. The ship in which he sailed was decked, the other two were merchant caravels*. As he advanced within the tropics, the change of climate, and the close and sultry weather which prevailed, brought on a severe attack of the gout, followed by a violent fever. Notwithstanding his painful illness, however, he enjoyed the full possession of his faculties, and continued to keep his reckoning, and make his observations, with his usual vigilance and minuteness.

On the 27th of June, he arrived among the Cape de Verde Islands, which, instead of the freshness and verdure which their name would betoken, presented an aspect of the most cheerless sterility. He remained among these islands but a very few days, being disappointed in his expectation of obtaining goat's flesh for ships' provisions, and cattle for stock for the island of Hispaniola. To procure them would require some

* P. Martyr., decad. 1, l. 6.

delay; in the mean time the health of himself and of his people suffered under the influence of the weather. The atmosphere was loaded with clouds and vapours; neither sun nor star was to be seen; a sultry depressing temperature prevailed; and the livid looks of the inhabitants bore witness to the insalubrity of the climate *.

Leaving the island of Buena Vista on the 5th of July, Columbus stood to the south-west, intending to continue on until he found himself under the equinoctial line. The currents, however, which ran to the north and north-west among these islands impeded his progress, and kept him for two days in sight of the Island del Fuego. The volcanic summit of this island, which, seen at a distance, resembled a church with a lofty steeple, and which was said at times to emit smoke and flames, was the last point discerned of the Old World.

Continuing to the south-west, about one hundred and twenty leagues, he found himself, on the 13th of July, according to his observations, in the fifth degree of north latitude. He had entered

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 65.

that region which extends for eight or ten degrees on each side of the line, and is known among seamen by the name of the calm latitudes. The trade winds, from the south-east and north-east, meeting in the neighbourhood of the equator, neutralize each other, and a steady calmness of the elements is produced. The whole sea is like a mirror, and vessels remain almost motionless, with flapping sails; the crews panting under the heat of a vertical sun, unmitigated by any refreshing breeze. Weeks are sometimes employed in crossing this lifeless tract of the ocean.

The weather for some time past had been cloudy and oppressive; but on the 13th there was a bright and burning sun. The wind suddenly fell, and a dead sultry calm commenced, which lasted for eight days. The air was like a furnace; the tar melted, the seams of the ships yawned; the salt meat became putrid; the wheat was parched as if with fire; the hoops shrank from the wine and water-casks, some of which leaked, and others burst; while the heat in the holds of the vessels was so suffocating, that no one could remain below a sufficient time to

prevent the damage that was taking place. The mariners lost all strength and spirits, and sunk under the oppressive heat. It seemed as if the old fable of the torrid zone was about to be realized; and that they were approaching a fiery region, where it would be impossible to exist. It is true the heavens were, for a great part of the time, overcast, and there were drizzling showers; but the atmosphere was close and stifling, and there was that combination of heat and moisture which relaxes all the energies of the human frame.

During this time, the admiral suffered extremely from the gout, but, as usual, the activity of his mind, heightened by his anxiety, allowed him no indulgence or repose. He was in an unknown part of the ocean, where everything depended upon his vigilance and sagacity; and was continually watching the phenomena of the elements, and looking out for signs of land. Finding the heat so intolerable, he altered his course, and steered to the south-west, hoping to find a milder temperature farther on, even under the same parallel. He had observed, in his previous voy-

ages, that after sailing westward a hundred leagues from the Azores, a wonderful change took place in the sea and sky, both becoming serene and bland, and the air temperate and refreshing. He imagined that a peculiar mildness and suavity prevailed over a great tract of ocean extending from north to south, into which the navigator, sailing from east to west, would suddenly enter, as if crossing a line. The event seemed to justify his theory, for after making their way slowly for some time to the westward, through an ordeal of heats and calms, with a murky stifling atmosphere, the ships all at once emerged into a genial region, a pleasant cooling breeze played over the surface of the sea, and gently filled their sails, the close and drizzling clouds broke away, the sky became serene and clear, and the sun shone forth with all its splendour, but no longer with a burning heat.

Columbus had intended, on reaching this temperate, tract to have stood once more to the south and then westward; but he found his ships so damaged by the late parching weather, which had opened their seams and caused them to leak exces-

sively, that it was necessary to seek some convenient harbour as soon as possible, where they might be refitted. Much of the provisions also was spoiled, and the water was nearly exhausted. He kept on therefore directly to the west, trusting, from the flights of birds and other favourable indications, that he should soon arrive at land. Day after day passed away without his expectations being realized. The distresses of his men became continually more urgent; wherefore, supposing himself in the longitude of the Caribbee Islands, he bore away towards the northward in search of them, intending to touch among them for refreshments and repairs, and then to proceed to Hispaniola *.

On the 31st of July, there was not above one cask of water remaining in each ship, and the admiral experienced great anxiety. About midday, a mariner named Alonzo Perez, being accidentally at the mast-head, beheld the summits of three mountains rising above the horizon. He immediately gave the cry of land, to the great joy of the crew. As the ships drew nearer it was

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 67.

observed that these mountains were united at the base. Columbus had determined to consecrate the first land he should behold, by giving it the name of the Trinity. The appearance of these three mountains united into one, struck him as a singular and almost mysterious coincidence with a solemn feeling of devotion; therefore he gave to this newly-discovered island the name of La Trinidad, which it continues to bear at the present day *.

* Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

CHAPTER II.

VOYAGE THROUGH THE GULF OF PARIA.

[1498.]

Shaping his course for the island, Columbus approached its eastern extremity, to which he gave the name of Punta de la Galera, from the form of a rock in the sea, which resembled a galley under sail. He had to coast for five leagues along the southern shore, before he could find safe anchorage. On the following day, (August 1,) he continued coasting westward, in search of water and a convenient harbour where the vessels might be careened. He was surprised at the verdure and fertility of the country, having expected to find it more parched and sterile as he approached the equator; whereas he beheld stately groves of palm-trees, and luxuriant forests, which swept down to the sea-side, with fountains and running streams beneath their shade. The shores were low and uninhabited, but the country rose in the interior, was cultivated in many places, and en-

livened by hamlets and scattered habitations. In a word, the softness and purity of the climate, and the verdure, freshness and sweetness of the country, appeared to Columbus to equal the delights of early spring in the beautiful province of Valentia in Spain *.

Anchoring at a point to which he gave the name of Punta de la Playa, he sent the boats on shore for water. Here, to their great joy, the seamen found an abundant and limpid brook, at which they filled their casks. There was no safe harbour, however, for the vessels, nor could they meet with any of the islanders, though they found traces of their footsteps and various fishing implements, which they had left behind, in the hurry of their flight. There were tracks also of animals, which the seamen supposed to be goats, but which must have been deer, with which, as it was afterwards ascertained, the island abounded.

While thus coasting the island on the 1st of August, Columbus beheld land to the south, stretching to the distance of more than twenty

* Letter of Columbus to the Sovereigns from Hispaniola, Navarrete Collec. t. 1.

leagues. It was that low tract of coast intersected by the numerous branches of the Oronoco, but the admiral, supposing it to be an island, gave it the name of La Isla Santa; little imagining that he now, for the first time, beheld that main continent, that Terra firma, which had been the object of his earnest search.

On the 2d of August he continued on to the south-west point of Trinidad, which he called Point Arenal. It stretched towards a corresponding point of Terra firma, making a narrow pass, with a high rock in the centre, to which he gave the name of El Gallo. Near this pass the ships cast anchor. As they were approaching this place, a large canoe, in which were five-and-twenty Indians, put off from the shore, and, coming within bow-shot, paused, and hailed the ships in a language which no one on board understood. Being extremely desirous of obtaining a near view of these people, and of making inquiries concerning their country, Columbus tried to allure them on board, by friendly signs, by the display of looking-glasses, basins of polished metal, and various glittering trinkets, but all in vain. They re-

mained gazing in mute wonder for above two hours, but, with their paddles in their hands, ready to take to flight on the least attempt to approach them. They were near enough, however, for him to have a full view of them. They were all young men, well formed, with long hair, and fairer complexions than the Indians he had hitherto seen. They were naked, excepting bands and fillets of cotton about their heads, and coloured cloths of the same about their loins. They were armed with bows and arrows, the latter feathered and tipped with bone, and they had bucklers, an article of armour which had never before been seen among the inhabitants of the New World.

Having found all other means to attract them ineffectual, Columbus now tried the power of music. He knew the fondness of the Indians for dances performed to the sound of their rude drums, and the chant of their traditional ballads. He ordered something similar to be executed on the deck of his ship, where, while one man sang to the beat of the tabor, and the sound of other musical instruments, the ship-boys danced, after

the popular Spanish fashion. No sooner, however, did this symphony strike up, than the Indians, mistaking it for a signal of hostilities, put their bucklers on their arms, seized their bows, and let fly a shower of arrows. This rude salutation was immediately answered by the discharge of a couple of cross-bows, which put the auditors to flight, and concluded this singular entertainment.

Though thus shy of the admiral's vessel, they approached one of the caravels without fear or hesitation, and, running under the stern, had a parley with the pilot, who gave a cap and a mantle to the one who appeared to be the chieftain. He received the presents with great delight, inviting the pilot by signs to come to land, where he should be well entertained, and receive great presents in return. On his appearing to consent, they went to shore to wait for him. The pilot put off in the boat of the caravel to ask permission of the admiral; but the Indians, seeing him go on board of the hostile ship, suspected some treachery, and springing into their canoe,

darted away with the swiftness of the wind, nor was any thing more seen of them *.

The complexion and other physical characteristics of these savages caused much surprise and speculation in the mind of Columbus. Supposing himself in the seventh degree of latitude, though actually in the tenth, he had expected to find the inhabitants similar to the natives of Africa under the same parallel, who were black, ill-shaped, and with crisped hair, or rather wool; whereas these Indians were well formed, had long hair, and were even fairer than those more distant from the equator. The climate, also, instead of being hotter as he approached the equinoctial, appeared more temperate. He was now in the dog-days, yet the nights and mornings were so cool that it was necessary to use covering as in winter. This is the case in many parts of the torrid zone, especially in calm weather, when there is no wind. Nature, by heavy dews, in the long nights of those latitudes, cools and refreshes the earth

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 88. P. Martyr, decad. 1, l. 6. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 138. MS. Letter of Columbus to the Castilian Sovereigns, Navarrete Collec., t. i.

after the great heats of the day. Columbus was at first greatly perplexed by these contradictions to the course of nature, as observed in the Old World; they were in opposition also to the expectations he had founded on the theory of Ferrer the lapidary, but they gradually contributed to the formation of a theory which was springing up in his active imagination, and which will be presently shown.

After anchoring at Point Arenal, the crews were permitted to land and refresh themselves among the shady woods and green lawns of the island. There were no runs of water, but by sinking pits in the sand they soon obtained sufficient to fill the casks. Columbus, however, found his anchorage at this place extremely insecure. A rapid current set from the eastward through the strait formed by the main land and the island of Trinidad, flowing, as he observed, night and day, with as much fury as the Guadalquivir when swollen by floods. In the pass between Point Arenal and its correspondent point, the current, being confined, boiled and raged to such a degree, that Columbus thought it was crossed by

a reef of rocks and shoals, preventing all entrance, with others extending beyond, over which the waters roared like breakers on a rocky shore. To this pass, from its angry and dangerous appearance, he gave the name of Boca del Sierpe (the mouth of the serpent). He thus found himself placed between two difficulties. The continual current from the east seemed to prevent all return, while the rocks which appeared to beset the pass threatened destruction if he should attempt to proceed. Being on board of his ship, late at night, kept awake by painful illness and an anxious and watchful spirit, he heard a terrible roaring from the south. On looking out in that direction, he beheld the sea heaped up, as it were, into a great ridge or hill, the height of the ship, covered with foam, and rolling towards him with a tremendous uproar. As this furious surge approached, rendered more terrible in appearance by the obscurity of night, he trembled for the safety of his vessels. His own ship was suddenly lifted up with violence, to such a height that he dreaded lest it should be overturned or cast upon the rocks, while another of the ships was torn

violently from her anchorage, and exposed to imminent peril. The crews were for a time in great consternation, and feared they should be swallowed up in the commotion of the waters: but this mountainous surge passed on, and gradually subsided, after a violent contest with the counter-current of the strait*. This sudden rush of water, it is supposed, was caused by the swelling of one of the rivers which flow into the Gulf of Paria, and which was as yet unknown to Columbus.

Anxious to extricate himself from this dangerous neighbourhood, he sent the boats on the following morning to sound the depth of water at the Boca del Sierpe, and to ascertain whether it was possible for the ships to pass through there to the northward. To his great joy, they returned with a report that there were several fathoms of water, and currents and eddies setting both ways, either to enter or return. A favourable breeze prevailing, he immediately made sail, and passing through the formidable strait in safety, found

* Letter of Columbus to the Castilian Sovereigns, Navarrete Collect., t. i. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., c. 10. Hist. del Almirante, c. 69.

himself in a tranquil expanse beyond. He was now on the inner side of Trinidad. To his left spread that broad Gulf since known by the name of Paria, which he supposed to be the open sea, but was surprised, on tasting it, to find the water fresh. He continued to navigate northward, towards a mountain at the north-west point of the island, about fourteen leagues from Point Arenal. Here he beheld two lofty capes of land opposite to each other, one on the island of Trinidad, the other to the west, on the long promontory of Paria, which stretches from the main land and forms the northern side of the Gulf, but which Columbus mistook for an island, and gave it the name of Isla de Gracia.

Between these capes there was another pass, which appeared even more dangerous than the Boca del Sierpe, being beset with rocks, among which the current forced its way with roaring turbulence. To this pass Columbus gave the name of Boca del Drago. Not choosing to encounter its apparent dangers, he turned northward, on Sunday, the 5th of August, and steered along the inner side of the supposed island of Gracia, intending to keep on until he came to the

end of it, and then to strike northward into the free and open ocean, and shape his course for Hispaniola.

It was a fair and beautiful coast, indented with fine harbours lying close to each other; the country cultivated in many places, in others covered with fruit trees and stately forests, and watered by frequent streams. What greatly astonished Columbus, was still to find the water fresh, and that it grew more and more so the farther he proceeded; it being that season of the year when the various rivers which empty themselves into this Gulf are swollen by rains, and pour forth such quantities of fresh water as to conquer the saltness of the ocean. He was also surprised at the smooth placidity of the sea, which appeared as tranquil and safe as one vast harbour, so that there was no need of seeking a port to anchor in.

As yet he had not been able to hold any communication with the people of this part of the New World. The shores which he had visited, though occasionally cultivated by the hand of man, were silent and deserted, and, excepting the fugitive party in the canoe at Point Arenal, he had seen

nothing of the natives. He was extremely anxious to meet with some human being who could break this silence, and give him some information concerning the country. After sailing several leagues along the coast, therefore, he anchored on Monday, the 6th of August, at a place where there appeared signs of cultivation, and sent the boats on shore. They found traces of men—fires which they had kindled, the remains of fish which they had cooked, and foot-prints where they had recently passed; there was likewise a roofless house, but not an individual to be seen. The coast was hilly, covered with beautiful and fruitful groves, and abounding with monkies. Continuing farther westward, to where the country was more level, Columbus anchored in a river.

Immediately a canoe, with three or four Indians, came off to the caravel nearest to the shore, the captain of which, pretending a desire to accompany them to land, sprang into their canoe, overturned it, and with the assistance of his seamen, secured the Indians as they were swimming. When they were brought to the admiral, he soon dissipated their alarm by his usual benignity; he

gave them beads, hawks'-bells, and sugar, and sent them highly gratified on shore, where many of their countrymen were assembled. This kind treatment, as usual, had the most favourable effect. Such of the natives as had canoes, came off to the ships with the fullest confidence. They were tall of stature, finely formed, and free and graceful in their movements. Their hair was long and straight; some wore it cut short, but none of them braided it, as was the custom among the natives of Hispaniola. They were armed with bows, arrows, and targets; the men wore cotton cloths about their heads and loins, beautifully wrought with various colours, so as at a distance to look like silk; but the women were entirely naked. They brought bread, maize, and other eatables, with different kinds of beverage, some white, made from maize, and resembling beer, and others green, of a vinous flavour, and expressed from various fruits. They appeared to judge of everything by the sense of smell, as others examine objects by the sight or touch. When they approached a boat, they smelt to it, and then to the people. In like manner every-

thing that was given them was tried. They set but little value upon beads, but were extravagantly delighted with hawks'-bells. Brass also was held in high estimation ; they appeared to find something extremely grateful in the smell of it, and called it "Turey," signifying that it was from the skies *.

From these Indians Columbus understood, that the name of their country was Paria, and that farther to the west he would find it more populous. Taking several of them to serve as guides and mediators, he proceeded eight eagues westward to a point which he called Aguja, or the Needle. Here he arived at three o'clock in the morning. When the day dawned he was delighted with the beauty of the country. It was cultivated in many places, highly populous, and adorned with magnificent vegetation. The habitations of the natives were interspersed among groves laden with fruits and flowers. The grapevines entwined themselves among the trees, and birds of brilliant plumage fluttered from branch to branch. The air was temperate and bland, and

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., c. 11.

sweetened by the fragrance of flowers and blossoms; and numerous fountains and limpid streams kept up a universal verdure and freshness. Columbus was so much charmed with the beauty and amenity of this favoured part of the coast, that he gave it the name of The Gardens.

The natives came off in great numbers, in canoes, which were superior in construction to those hitherto seen, being very large and light, and having a cabin in the centre for the accommodation of the owner and his family. They invited Columbus, in the name of their king, to come to land. Many of them had collars and burnished plates about their necks, of that inferior kind of gold called by the Indians Guanin. They said that it came from a high land, which they pointed out, at no great distance, to the west, but intimated that it was dangerous to go there, either because the inhabitants were cannibals, or the place infested by venomous animals*. But what suddenly aroused the attention, and awakened the cupidity of the Spaniards, was to behold strings of pearls

* Letter of Columbus to the Castilian Sovereigns, Navarrete Collec., t. i., p. 252.

round the arms of some of the natives. They informed Columbus that they were procured on the sea-coast, on the northern side of Paria, which he still supposed to be an island; and they shewed the mother-of-pearl shells from whence they had been taken. Anxious to acquire further information, and to procure specimens of these pearls to send to Spain, he despatched the boats to shore. The moment the Spaniards landed, a multitude of the natives came to the beach to receive them, headed by their chief cacique and his son. They treated them with profound reverence, as beings descended from heaven, and conducted them to a spacious house, the residence of the cacique, where they were feasted in a simple and hospitable manner, their banquet consisting of bread and various fruits of excellent flavour, and the different kinds of beverage which have been already mentioned. While they were in the house, the men remained together at one end of it, and the women at the other. After they had finished their collation at the house of the cacique, they were taken to that of his son, where a like repast was set before them. These

people were remarkably affable, though, at the same time, they possessed a more intrepid and martial air and spirit than the natives of Cuba and Hispaniola. They were fairer, Columbus observes, than any he had yet seen, though so near to the equinoctial line, where he had expected to find them of the colour of Ethiopians. Many ornaments of gold were seen among them, but all of an inferior quality: one Indian had a piece of the size of an apple. They had various kinds of domesticated parrots, one of a light green colour, with a yellow neck, and the tips of the wings of a bright red; others of the size of domestic fowls, and of a vivid scarlet, excepting some azure feathers in the wings. These they readily gave to the Spaniards; but what the latter most coveted were the pearls, of which they saw many necklaces and bracelets among the Indian women. The latter gladly gave them in exchange for hawks'-bells or any article of brass, and several specimens of fine pearls were procured for the admiral to send to the sovereigns*.

* Letter of Columbus. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., c. 11. Hist. del Almirante, c. 70.

The kindness and amity of this people was heightened by an intelligent demeanour and a martial frankness. They seemed worthy of the beautiful country they inhabited. It was a cause of great concern both to them and the Spaniards, that they could not understand each other's language. They conversed, however, by signs; mutual good-will made their intercourse easy and pleasant; and at the hour of vespers the Spaniards returned on board of their ships, highly gratified with their entertainment.

CHAPTER III.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE THROUGH THE GULF OF PARIA. RETURN TO HISPANIOLA.

[1498.]

The quantity of fine pearls found among the natives of Paria was sufficient to arouse the sanguine anticipations of Columbus. It appeared to corroborate the theory of Ferrer, the learned jeweller, that, as he approached the equator, he would find the most rare and precious productions of nature. His active imagination, with its intuitive rapidity, seized upon every surrounding circumstance that appeared to favour his wishes, and, combining them, drew thence the most brilliant inferences. He had read in Pliny that pearls are generated from drops of dew which fall into the mouths of oysters: if so, what place could be more propitious to their growth and multiplication than the coast of Paria? The dew in these parts was heavy and abundant, and the oysters were so plentiful that they clustered about the

roots and pendant branches of the mangrove trees, which grew upon the very margin of the tranquil sea. When a branch which had drooped for a time in the water was drawn forth, it was found covered with oysters. Las Casas, noticing this sanguine conclusion of Columbus, observes, that the shell-fish here spoken of are not of the kind which produce pearl, for that those by a natural instinct, as if conscious of their precious charge, hide themselves in the deepest water *.

Still imagining the coast of Paria to be an island, and anxious to circumnavigate it and arrive at the place where these pearls were said by the Indians to abound, Columbus left the Gardens on the 10th of August, and continued coasting westward within the gulf, in search of an outlet to the north. He observed portions of Terra firma appearing towards the bottom of the gulf, which he supposed to be islands, and called them Isabeta and Tramontana, and fancied that the desired outlet to the sea must lie between them. As he advanced, however, he found the water continually growing shal-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., c. 136.

lower and fresher, until he did not dare to venture any farther with his ship, which, he observed, was of too great a size for expeditions of this kind, being of an hundred tons burden, and requiring three fathoms of water. He came to anchor, therefore, and sent a light caravel called the Correo, to ascertain whether there was an outlet to the ocean between the supposed islands. The caravel returned on the following day, reporting that at the western end of the gulf there was an opening of two leagues, which led into an inner and circular gulf, surrounded by four openings, apparently smaller gulfs, or rather mouths of rivers, from which flowed the great quantity of fresh water that sweetened the neighbouring sea. In fact, from one of these mouths issued the great river the Cupari-pari, or, as it is now called, the Paria. To this inner and circular gulf Columbus gave the name of the Gulf of Pearls, through a mistaken idea that they abounded in its waters, though none, in fact, are found there. He still imagined that the four openings of which the mariners spoke, might be intervals between islands, though they affirmed

that all the land he saw was one connected continent *. As it was impossible to proceed further westward with his ships, he had no alternative but to retrace his course, and seek an exit to the north by the Boca del Drago. He would gladly have continued for some time to explore this coast, for he considered himself in one of those opulent regions described as the most favoured upon earth, and which increase in riches towards the equator. Imperious considerations, however, compelled him to shorten his voyage and hasten to San Domingo. The sea-stores of his ships were almost exhausted, and the various supplies for the colony, with which they were freighted, were in danger of spoiling. He was suffering, also, extremely in his health. Besides the gout, which had rendered him a cripple for the greater part of the voyage, he was afflicted by a complaint in his eyes, caused by fatigue and over-watching, which almost deprived him of sight. Even the voyage along the coast of Cuba, he observes, in which he was three-and-thirty days almost without sleep, had not so injured his eyes and disordered his

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 78.

frame, or caused him so much painful suffering as the present *.

On the 11th of August, therefore, he set sail eastward for the Boca del Drago, and was borne along with great velocity by the currents, which, however, prevented him from landing again at his favourite spot, the Gardens. On Sunday the 13th, he anchored near to the Boca, in a fine harbour, to which he gave the name of Puerto de Gatos, from a species of monkey called Gato Paulo, with which the neighbourhood abounded. On the margin of the sea he perceived many trees which, as he thought, produced the mirabolane, a fruit only found in the countries of the East. There were great numbers also of mangroves growing within the water, with oysters clinging to their branches, their mouths open, as he supposed, to receive the dew, which was afterwards to be transformed to pearls †.

On the following morning, the 14th of August, towards noon, the ships approached the Boca del Drago, and prepared to venture through that formidable pass. The distance from Cape Boto at

* Letter of Columbus to the Sovereigns, Navarrete, t. i., p. 252.

† Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., cap. 10.

the end of Paria, and Cape Lapa the extremity of Trinidad, is about five leagues; but in the interval there were two islands, which Columbus named Caracol and Delphin. The impetuous body of fresh water which flows through the gulf, particularly in the rainy months of July and August, is confined at the narrow outlets between these islands, where it causes a turbulent sea, foaming and roaring as if breaking over rocks, and rendering the entrance and exit of the gulf extremely dangerous. The horrors and perils of such places are always tenfold to discoverers, who have no chart, or pilot, or advice of previous voyager, to guide them. Columbus, at first, apprehended sunken rocks and shoals; but on attentively considering the commotion of the strait, he attributed it to the conflict between the prodigious body of fresh water setting through the gulf and struggling for an outlet, and the tide of salt water struggling to enter. The ships had scarcely ventured into the fearful channel when the wind died away, and they were in danger every moment of being thrown upon the rocks or sands. The current of fresh water, however, gained the victory, and car-

ried them safely through. The admiral, when once more safe in the open sea, congratulated himself upon his escape from this perilous strait, which, he observes, might well be called the Mouth of the Dragon *.

He now stood to the westward, running along the outer coast of Paria, still supposing it an island, and intending to visit the Gulf of Pearls, which he imagined to be at the end of it, opening to the sea. He wished to ascertain whether this great body of fresh water proceeded from rivers, as the crew of the caravel Correo had affirmed; for it appeared to him impossible that the streams of mere islands, as he supposed the surrounding lands, could furnish such a prodigious volume of water.

On leaving the Boca del Drago, he saw to the north-east, many leagues distant, two islands, which he called Assumption and Conception; probably those now known as Tobago and Granada. In his course along the northern coast of Paria he saw several other small islands, and many fine harbours, to some of which he gave names, but they have ceased to be known by

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., c. 11.

them. On the 15th he discovered the islands of Margarita and Cubagua, afterwards famous for their pearl fishery. The island of Margarita, about fifteen leagues in length, and six in breadth, was well peopled. The little island of Cubagua, lying between it and the main land, and only about four leagues from the latter, was dry and steril, without either wood or fresh water, but possessing a good harbour. On approaching this island, the admiral beheld a number of Indians fishing for pearls, who made for the land. A boat being sent to communicate with them, one of the sailors noticed many strings of pearls round the neck of a female. Having a plate of Valentia ware, a kind of porcelain painted and varnished with gaudy colours, he broke it, and presented the pieces to the Indian woman, who gave him in exchange a considerable number of her pearls. These he carried to the admiral, who immediately sent persons on shore, well provided with Valentian plates and hawks'-bells, for which in a little time he procured about three pounds weight of pearls, some of which were of a very large size*,

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, l. iii., p. 169.

and were sent by him afterwards to the sovereigns as specimens.

There was great temptation to linger near these shores, and to visit other spots, which the Indians mentioned as abounding in pearls. The coast of Paria also continued extending to the westward as far as the eye could reach, rising into a range of mountains, and provoking examination to ascertain whether, as he began to think, it was a part of the Asiatic continent. Columbus was compelled, however, though with the greatest reluctance, to forego this most interesting investigation.

The malady of his eyes had now grown so virulent, that he could no longer take observations or keep a look out, but had to trust to the reports of the pilots and mariners. He bore away, therefore, for Hispaniola, intending to repose there from the toils of his voyage, and to recruit his health, while he should send his brother, the Adelantado, to complete the discovery of this important country. After sailing for five days to the north-west, he made the island of Hispaniola on the 19th of August, fifty leagues to the westward of the river Ozema, the place of his destination;

and anchored on the following morning under the little island of Beata.

He was astonished to find himself so mistaken in his calculations, and so far below his destined port; but he attributed it correctly to the force of the current setting out of the Boca del Drago, which, while he had lain-to at nights, to avoid running on rocks and shoals, had borne his ships insensibly to the west. This current, which sets across the Caribbean sea, and the continuation of which now bears the name of the Gulf Stream, was so rapid, that on the 15th, when the wind was but moderate, the ships had made seventy-five leagues in four-and-twenty hours. Columbus attributed to the violence of this current the formation of that pass called the Boca del Drago, where he supposed it had forced its way through a narrow isthmus that formerly connected Trinidad with the extremity of Paria. He imagined, also, that its constant operation had worn away and inundated the borders of the main land, gradually producing that fringe of islands which stretches from Trinidad to the Lucayos or Bahamas, and which, according to his idea, had origi-

nally been part of the solid continent. In corroboration of this opinion, he notices the form of those islands, being narrow from north to south, and extending in length from east to west, in the direction of the current *. The island of Beata, where Columbus had anchored, is about thirty leagues to the west of the river Ozema, where he expected to find the new sea-port which his brother had been instructed to explore. The strong and steady current from the east, however, and the prevalence of winds from that quarter, might detain him for a long time at the island, and render the remainder of his voyage slow and precarious. He sent a boat on shore, therefore, to procure an Indian messenger to take a letter to his brother, the Adelantado. Six of the natives came off to the ships, one of whom was armed with a Spanish cross-bow. The anxious mind of the admiral was immediately alarmed at seeing a weapon of the kind in the possession of an Indian. It was not an article of traffic, and he feared could only have fallen into his hands by the death of some Spaniard †. He apprehended that further

* Letter to the King and Queen, Navarrete Collec., t. i.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., cap. 148.

evils had befallen the settlement during his long absence, and that there had again been troubles with the natives.

Having despatched his messenger, he again made sail, and arrived off the mouth of the river on the 30th of August. He was met on the way by a caravel, on board of which was the Adelantado, who, having received his letter, had hastened forth with affectionate ardour to welcome his arrival. The meeting of the brothers was a cause of mutual joy and comfort; they were strongly attached to each other, each had had his trials and sufferings during their long separation, and each looked with confidence to the other for relief. Don Bartholomew appears to have always had great deference for the brilliant genius, the enlarged mind, and the commanding reputation of his brother; while the latter placed great reliance, in times of difficulty, on the worldly knowledge, the indefatigable activity, and the lion-hearted courage of the Adelantado.

Columbus arrived almost the wreck of himself. His voyages were always of a nature to wear out the human frame, having to navigate amidst

unknown dangers, and to keep anxious watch, at all hours, and in all weathers. As age and infirmity increased upon him, these trials became the more severe. His constitution must originally have been wonderfully vigorous; but even a powerful constitution, exposed to too great hardships, at an advanced period of life, yields to disease and pain. In this last voyage he had been parched and consumed by fever, racked by gout, and his whole system disordered by incipient watchfulness; he came into port haggard, emaciated, and almost blind. His spirit, however, was, as usual, superior to all bodily affliction or decay, and he looked forward with magnificent anticipations to the result of his recent discoveries, which he intended should be immediately prosecuted by his hardy and enterprising brother.

CHAPTER IV.

SPECULATIONS OF COLUMBUS CONCERNING THE COAST OF PARIA.

[1498.]

The natural phenomena of a great and striking nature which had presented themselves in the course of this voyage, had powerfully excited the contemplative mind of Columbus. In considering the vast body of fresh water which flows into the Gulf of Paria, and thence rushes with such force into the ocean, he formed one of his simple and great conclusions. It could not be produced by an island, or by islands; it must be some mighty river which had wandered through a great extent of country, collecting all its streams, and pouring them in one vast current into the ocean. The land, therefore, which furnished such a river must be a continent. He now supposed that the various tracts of land which he had beheld about the gulf, were mostly connected together. That the coast of Paria extended far to the west, beyond

a chain of mountains which he had beheld afar off from Margarita; and that the land opposite to Trinidad, instead of being an island, continued to an immense distance to the south, far beyond the equator, into that hemisphere hitherto unknown to civilized man. He considered all this an extension of the Asiatic continent; thus presuming that the greater part of the surface of the globe was firm land. In this last opinion he found himself supported by authors of the highest name, both ancient and modern; among whom he cites Aristotle and Seneca, St. Augustine and Cardinal Pedro de Aliaco, to whose writings he always attached great value. He lays particular stress also on the assertion of the apochryphal Esdras, that, of seven parts of the world, six are dry land, and one part only is covered with water.

The land, therefore, surrounding the Gulf of Paria, was but the border of an almost boundless continent, stretching far to the west and to the south, including the most precious regions of the earth, lying under the most auspicious stars and benignant skies; but as yet unknown and uncivilized, free to be discovered and appropriated by

any Christian nation. "May it please our Lord," he exclaims in his letter to the sovereigns, "to give long life and health to your highnesses, that you may prosecute this noble enterprise, in which, methinks, God will receive great service, Spain vast increase of grandeur, and all Christians much consolation and delight, since the name of our Saviour will be divulged throughout these lands."

Thus far the deductions of Columbus, though sanguine, admit of little cavil; but he carried them still further, until they ended in what may appear to some mere chimerical reveries. In his letter to the sovereigns, he stated that, on his former voyages, when he steered westward from the Azores, he had observed, after sailing about a hundred leagues, a sudden and great change in the sky and the stars, the temperature of the air, and the calmness of the ocean. It seemed as if a line ran from north to south, beyond which every thing became different. The needle which had previously inclined toward the north-east, now varied a whole point to the north-west. The sea, hitherto clear, was covered with weeds, so dense, that in his first voyage he had expected to

run aground upon shoals. A universal tranquillity reigned throughout the elements, and the climate was mild and genial whether in summer or winter. On taking his astronomical observations at night, after crossing that imaginary line, the north star appeared to him to describe a diurnal circle in the heavens of five degrees in diameter.

On his present voyage he had varied his route, and had run southward from the Cape de Verde Islands for the equinoctial line. Before reaching it, however, the heat had become insupportable, and a wind springing up from the east, he had been induced to strike westward, when in the parallel of Sierra Leone in Guinea. For several days he had been almost consumed by scorching and stifling heat under a sultry yet clouded sky, and in a drizzling atmosphere, until he arrived at the ideal line already mentioned, extending from north to south. Here suddenly, to his great relief, he had emerged into serene weather, with a clear blue sky and a sweet and temperate atmosphere. The further he had proceeded west, the more pure and genial he had found the climate; the sea tranquil, the breezes soft and balmy. All

these phenomena coincided with those he had remarked at the same line, though further north, in his former voyages; excepting that here there was no herbage in the sea, and the movements of stars were different. The polar star appeared to him here to describe a diurnal circle of ten degrees instead of five; an augmentation which struck him with astonishment, but which he says he ascertained by observations taken in different nights, with his quadrant. Its greatest altitude at the former place, in the parallel of the Azores, he had found to be ten degrees, and in the present place fifteen.

From these and other circumstances, he was inclined to doubt the received theory with respect to the form of the earth. Philosophers had described it as spherical; but they knew nothing of the part of the world which he had discovered. The ancient part, known to them, he had no doubt was spherical, but he now supposed the real form of the earth to be that of a pear, one part much more elevated than the rest, and tapering upward toward the skies. This part he supposed to be in the interior of this newly-found continent, and

immediately under the equator. All the phenomena which he had previously noticed, appeared to corroborate this theory. The variations which he had observed in passing the imaginary line running from north to south, he concluded to be caused by the ships having arrived at this supposed swelling of the earth, where they began gently to mount towards the skies into a purer and more celestial atmosphere *. The variation of the needle he ascribed to the same cause, being affected by the coolness and mildness of the climate; varying to the north-west, in proportion as the ships continued onward in their ascent †. So also the altitude of the north star, and the circle it described in the heavens, appeared to be greater, in consequence of being regarded from a

* Peter Martyr mentions, that the admiral told him, that, from the climate of great heat and unwholesome air, he had ascended the back of the sea, being, as it were, a high mountain towards heaven. Decad. 1, lib. vi.

† Columbus in his attempts to account for the variation of the needle, supposed that the north star possessed the quality of the four cardinal points, as did likewise the loadstone. That if the needle were touched with one part of the loadstone, it would point east, and another west, and so on. Wherefore, he adds, those who prepare or magnetize the needles, cover the loadstone with a cloth, so that the north part only remains out; that is to say, the part which possesses the virtue of causing the needle to point to the north. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 66.

greater elevation, less obliquely, and through a purer medium of atmosphere, and these phenomena would be found to increase the more the navigator approached the equator, from the still increasing eminence of this part of the earth.

He noticed, also, the difference of climate, vegetation, and people, of this part of the New World, from those under the same parallel in Africa. There the heat was insupportable, the land parched and steril, the inhabitants were black, with crisped wool, ill-shapen in their forms, and dull and brutal in their natures. Here, on the contrary, although the sun was in Leo, he found the noontide heat moderate, the mornings and evenings fresh and cool, the country green and fruitful, and covered with beautiful forests, the people fairer even than those in the lands he had discovered further north, having long hair, with well proportioned and graceful forms, lively minds, and courageous dispositions. All this, in a latitude so near to the equator, he attributed to the superior altitude of this part of the world, by which it was raised into a more celestial region of the air. On turning northward, through the

Gulf of Paria, he had found the circle described by the north star again to diminish. The current of the sea also increased in velocity, wearing away, as has already been remarked, the borders of the continent, and producing by its incessant operation the adjacent islands. This was a further confirmation of the idea that he ascended in going southward, and descended in returning northward.

Aristotle had imagined that the highest part of the earth, and nearest to the skies, was under the antarctic pole. Other sages had maintained that it was under the arctic. Hence it was apparent that both conceived one part of the earth to be more elevated, and noble, and nearer to the heavens than the rest. They did not think of this eminence being under the equinoctial line, observed Columbus, because they had no certain knowledge of this hemisphere, but only spoke of it theoretically and from conjecture.

As usual, he assisted his theory by holy writ. The sun, when God created it, he observes, was in the first point of the Orient, or the first light was there. That place, according to his idea, must be here, in the remotest part of the east,

where the ocean and the extreme part of India meet under the equinoctial line, and where the highest point of the earth is situated. He supposed this apex of the world, though of immense height, to be neither rugged nor precipitous, but that the land rose to it by gentle and imperceptible degrees. The beautiful and fertile shores of Paria were situated on its remote borders, abounding of course with those precious articles which are congenial with the most favoured and excellent climates. As one penetrated in the interior and gradually ascended, the land would be found to increase in beauty and luxuriance, and in the exquisite nature of its productions, until it terminated in the summit under the equator. This he imagined to be the noblest and most perfect place on earth, enjoying, from its position, an equality of nights and days, and a uniformity of seasons, and being elevated into a serene and heavenly temperature, above the heats and colds, the clouds and vapours, the storms and tempests which deform and disturb the lower regions. In a word, here he supposed to be situated the original abode of our first parents, the primitive seat of human inno-

cence and bliss, the Garden of Eden, or terrestrial paradise. He imagined this place, according to the opinion of the most eminent fathers of the church, to be still flourishing, possessed of all its blissful delights, but inaccessible to mortal feet, excepting by divine permission. From this height he presumed, though of course from a great distance, proceeded the mighty stream of fresh water which filled the Gulf of Paria, and sweetened the salt ocean in its vicinity, being supplied by the fountain mentioned in Genesis, as springing from the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

Such was the singular speculation of Columbus, which he details at full length in a letter to the Castilian sovereigns *, citing various authorities for his opinions, among which were St. Augustine, St. Isidor, and St. Ambrosius, and fortifying his theory with much of that curious and speculative erudition in which he was deeply versed †. It shews how his ardent mind was heated by the magnificence of his discoveries. Shrewd men, in the coolness and quietude of ordinary life, and in

* Navarrete, Collec. de Viages, t. i., p. 242.

† See Illustrations, article SITUATION OF THE TERRESTRIAL PARADISE.

these modern days of cautious and sober fact, may smile at such a reverie, but it was countenanced by the speculations of the most sage and learned of those times, and if this had not been, could we wonder at any sally of the imagination in a man placed in the situation of Columbus? He beheld a vast world, rising, as it were, into existence before him, its nature and extent unknown and undefined, as yet a mere region for conjecture. Every day displayed some new feature of beauty and sublimity; island after island, whose rocks, he was told, were veined with gold, whose groves teemed with spices, or whose shores abounded with pearls. Interminable ranges of coast, promontory beyond promontory, stretching as far as the eye could reach; luxuriant valleys sweeping away into a vast interior, whose distant mountains, he was told, concealed still happier lands, and realms of still greater opulence. When he looked upon all this region of golden promise, it was with the glorious conviction that his genius had called it into existence; he regarded it with the triumphant eye of a discoverer. Had not Columbus been capable of these enthusiastic soarings of the imagination,

he might, with other sages, have reasoned calmly and coldly about the probability of a continent existing in the west, but he would never have had the daring enterprise to adventure in search of it into the unknown realms of ocean.

Still, in the midst of his fanciful speculations, we find that solid foundation of sagacity which formed the basis of his character. The conclusion which he drew from the great flow of the Oronoko, that it must be the outpouring of a continent, was acute and striking. A learned Spanish historian has also ingeniously excused other parts of his theory. "He suspected," observes he, "a certain elevation of the globe at one part of the equator; philosophers have since determined the world to be a spheroid, slightly elevated in its equatorial circumference. He suspected that the diversity of temperatures influenced the needle, not being able to penetrate the cause of its inconstant variations; the successive series of voyages and experiments have made this inconstancy more manifest, and have shewn that extreme cold sometimes divests the needle of all its virtue. Perhaps new observations may justify the surmise of Co-

lumbus. Even his error concerning the circle described by the polar star, which he thought augmented by an optical illusion in proportion as the observer approached the equinox, manifests him a philosopher superior to the time in which he lived *."

* Muños, Hist. N. Mundo, l. vi., § 32.

BOOK XI.

CHAPTER I.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE ADELANTADO. EXPEDITION TO THE PROVINCE OF XARAGUA.

[1498.]

Columbus had anticipated repose from his toils on arriving at Hispaniola, but a new scene of trouble and anxiety opened upon him, which was destined to impede the prosecution of his enterprises, and to affect all his future fortunes. To explain this, it is necessary to relate the occurrences of the island in the long space of time during which he had been so injuriously detained in Spain.

When he sailed for Europe in March, 1496, his brother Don Bartholomew, who remained as governor, with the title of Adelantado, took the earliest measures to execute his directions with respect to the mines recently discovered by Miguel Diaz on the south side of the island. Leaving Don Diego Columbus in command at Isabella,

he repaired with a large force to the neighbourhood of the mines, and choosing a favourable situation, in a place most abounding in ore, he built a fortress, to which he gave the name of St. Christoval. The workmen, however, finding grains of gold among the earth and stone employed in its construction, gave it the name of the Golden tower *.

The Adelantado remained here three months, superintending the building of the fortress, and making the necessary preparations for working the mines and purifying the ore. The progress of the work, however, was greatly impeded by scarcity of provisions, having frequently to detach a part of the men from their labours, and to send them about the country in quest of supplies. The former hospitality of the island was at an end. The Indians no longer gave their provisions freely; they had learnt from the white men to profit by the necessities of the stranger, and to exact a price for the bread that was to relieve his hunger. Their scanty stores, also, were soon exhausted, for their frugal habits, and their natural

* Peter Martyr, decad. 1, lib. v.

indolence and improvidence, seldom permitted them to have more provisions on hand than was requisite for present support.* The Adelantado found it difficult, therefore, to maintain so large a force in the neighbourhood, until they should have time to cultivate the earth and raise live-stock, or should receive supplies from Spain. Leaving ten men to guard the fortress, with a dog to assist them in catching utias, he marched with the rest of his men, about four hundred in number, to Fort Conception, in the abundant country of the Vega. He passed the whole month of June collecting the quarterly tribute, being supplied with food by Guarionex and his subordinate caciques. In the following month (July, 1496,) the three caravels commanded by Niño arrived from Spain, bringing a reinforcement of men, and, what was still more needed, a supply of provisions. The latter was quickly distributed among the hungry colonists, but unfortunately a great part was found to have been injured during the voyage. This was a serious misfortune in a community where the

* Peter Martyr, decad. 1, l. v.

least pressure of scarcity produced murmur and sedition.

By these ships the Adelantado received letters from his brother, directing him to found a town and sea-port in the mouth of the Ozema, near to the new mines. He requested him, also, to send prisoners to Spain such of the caciques and their subjects as had been concerned in the death of any of the colonists, that being considered as sufficient ground, by many of the ablest jurists and theologians of Spain, for selling them as slaves. On the return of the caravels, the Adelantado despatched three hundred Indian prisoners, and three caciques. These formed the ill-starred cargoes about which Niño had made such absurd vaunting, as though his ships were laden with treasure, and which had caused such mortification, disappointment, and delay to Columbus.

Having obtained by this arrival a supply of provisions, the Adelantado returned to the fortress of San Christoval, and from thence proceeded to the Ozema to choose a site for the proposed sea-port. After a careful examination, he chose the eastern bank of a natural haven at the mouth of the river.

It was easy of access, of sufficient depth, and good anchorage. The river ran through a beautiful and fertile country; its waters were pure and salubrious, and well stocked with fish; its banks were covered with trees bearing the fine fruits of the island, so that in sailing along, the fruits and flowers might be plucked with the hand from the branches which overhung the stream *. This delightful vicinity was the dwelling place of the female cacique who had conceived an affection for the young Spaniard Miguel Diaz, and had induced him to entice his countrymen to that part of the island. The promise she had given of a friendly reception on the part of her tribe was faithfully performed.

On a commanding bank of the harbour, Don Bartholomew erected a fortress, which at first was called Isabella, but afterwards San Domingo, and was the origin of the city which still bears that name. The Adelantado was of an active and indefatigable spirit. No sooner was the fortress completed, than he left in it a garrison of twenty men, and with the rest of his forces set out on an expe-

* P. Martyr, decad. 1, l. v.

dition to visit the dominions of Behechio, one of the principal chieftains of the island. This cacique, as has already been mentioned, reigned over Xaragua, a province comprising almost the whole coast at the west end of the island, including Cape Tiburon, and extending along the south side as far as Point Aguida, or the small island of Beata. It was one of the most populous and fertile districts. The situation was sheltered and delightful, the people were softer and more graceful in their manners than the rest of the islanders. Being so remote from all the fortresses, the cacique, although he had taken a part in the combination of the chieftains, had hitherto remained free from the incursions and exactions of the white men.

With this cacique resided Anacaona, widow of the late formidable Caonabo. She was sister to Behechio, and had taken refuge with her brother after the capture of her husband. She was one of the most beautiful females of the island; her name, in the Indian language, signified flower of gold. She possessed a genius superior to the generality of her race, and was said to excel in composing those little legendary ballads, or areytos, which

the natives chanted as they performed their national dances. All the Spanish writers agree in describing her as possessing a natural dignity and grace hardly to be credited in her ignorant and savage condition. Notwithstanding the ruin with which her husband had been overwhelmed by the hostility of the white men, she appears to have entertained no vindictive feeling towards them. She knew that he had provoked their vengeance by his own voluntary warfare. She regarded the Spaniards with admiration as almost superhuman beings, and her intelligent mind perceived the futility and impolicy of any attempt to resist their superiority in arts and arms. Having great influence over her brother Behechio, she counselled him to take warning by the fate of her husband, and to conciliate the friendship of the Spaniards; and it is supposed that a knowledge of the friendly sentiments and powerful influence of this princess, in a great measure prompted the Adelantado to his present expedition *.

In passing through those parts of the island

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Doming., l. ii., p. 147. Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, l. vi., § 6.

which had hitherto been unvisited by the Europeans, the Adelantado adopted the same imposing measures which the admiral had used on a former occasion; he put his cavalry in the advance, and entered all the Indian towns in martial array, with standards displayed, and the sound of drum and trumpet, inspiring the natives with great awe and admiration.

After proceeding about thirty leagues, he came to the river which, issuing from the mountains of Cibao, divides the southern side of the island. Crossing the stream, he despatched two parties of ten men each along the sea-coast in search of brazil-wood. They found great quantities, and felled many trees, which they stored in the Indian cabins, until they could be taken away by sea.

Inclining with his main force to the right, the Adelantado met, not far from the river, with the cacique Behechio, with a great army of his subjects, armed with bows, arrows, and lances. If he had come forth with an intention of opposing the inroad into his forest domains, he was probably daunted by the formidable appearance of the Spa-

niards. Laying aside his weapons, he advanced and accosted the Adelantado very amicably, professing that he was thus in arms for the purpose of subjecting certain villages along the river, and inquiring, at the same time, the object of this incursion of the Spaniards. The Adelantado assured him that he came in peace to visit him and his territories, and to pass a little time with him in friendly intercourse at Xaragua. He succeeded so well in allaying the apprehensions of the cacique, that he dismissed his army, and sent swift messengers in advance to announce his approach, and to order preparations for the suitable reception of so distinguished a guest. As the Spaniards advanced into the territories of the chieftain, and passed through the districts of his inferior caciques, the latter brought forth cassava bread, hemp, cotton, and the various productions of the land. At length they drew near to the residence of Behechio, which was a large town situated in a beautiful part of the country near the coast, at the bottom of that deep bay, called at present the Bight of Leagon.

The Spaniards had heard many accounts of the

soft and delightful region of Xaragua, in one part of which some of the Indian traditions placed their Elysian fields. They had heard much, also, of the beauty and urbanity of the inhabitants: the mode of their reception was calculated to confirm their favourable prepossessions. As they approached the place, thirty females of the cacique's household came forth to meet them, singing their areytos, or traditionary ballads, and dancing and waving palm branches. The married females wore aprons of embroidered cotton, reaching half way to the knee; the young women were entirely naked, with merely a fillet round the forehead, their hair falling upon their shoulders. They were beautifully proportioned, their skin smooth and delicate, and their complexion of a clear agreeable brown. According to old Peter Martyr, the Spaniards when they beheld them issuing forth from their green woods, almost imagined they beheld the fabled dryades, or native nymphs and fairies of the fountains, sung by the ancient poets *. When they came before Don Bartholomew, they knelt and gracefully presented

* P. Martyr, decad. 1, lib. v.

him the green branches. After these came the female cacique Anacaona, reclining on a kind of light litter borne by six Indians. Like the other females, she had no other covering than an apron of various-coloured cotton. She wore round her head a fragrant garland of red and white flowers, and wreaths of the same round her neck and arms. She received the Adelantado and his followers with that natural grace and courtesy for which she was celebrated; manifesting no hostility towards them for the fate her husband had experienced at their hands. On the contrary, she seemed from the first to conceive a great admiration and sincere friendship for the strangers.

The Adelantado and his officers were conducted to the house of Behechio, where a banquet was served up of utias, a great variety of sea and river fish, with the roots and fine fruits which formed the principal food of the Indians. Here first the Spaniards conquered their repugnance to the guana, the favourite delicacy of the Indians, but which the former had regarded with disgust, as a species of serpent. The Adelantado, willing to accustom himself to the usages of the country,

was the first to taste this animal, being kindly pressed thereto by Anacaona. His followers imitated his example; they found it to be highly palatable and delicate; and from that time forward, the guana began to be held in repute among Spanish epicures *.

The banquet being over, Don Bartholomew with six of his principal cavaliers were lodged in the dwelling of Behechio; the rest were distributed in the houses of the inferior caciques, where they slept in hammocks of matted cotton, the usual beds of the natives.

For two days they remained with the hospitable Behechio, entertained with various Indian games and festivities, among which the most remarkable was the representation of a battle. Two squadrons of naked Indians, armed with bows and

* "These serpentes lyke unto crocodiles, saving in biggness, they call guanas. Unto that day none of owre men durste adventure to taste of them, by reason of theyre horrible deformitie and lothsomnes. Yet the Adelantado being entysed by the pleasantnes of the kinge's sister, Anacaona, determined to taste of the serpentes. But when he felte the fleshe thereof to be so delycate to his tongue, he fel to amayne without al feare. The which thyng his companions perceiving, were not behynde hym, in greedynesse: insomuche that they had now none other talke than of the sweetnesse of these serpentes, which they affirm to be of more pleasant taste, than eyther our phesantes or partriches." Peter Martyr, decad. 1, book v. Eden's Eng. trans.

arrows, sallied suddenly into the public square and began to skirmish in a manner similar to the Moorish play of canes, or tilting reeds. By degrees, they became excited, and fought with such earnestness, that four were slain, and many wounded, which seemed to increase the interest and pleasure of the spectators. The contest would have continued longer, and might have been still more bloody, had not the Adelantado and the other cavaliers interfered and begged that the game might cease *. When the festivities were over, and familiar intercourse had promoted mutual confidence, the Adelantado addressed the cacique and Anacaona on the real object of his visit. He informed them that his brother, the admiral, had been sent to this island by the sovereigns of Castile, who were great and mighty potentates, with many kingdoms under their sway. That the admiral had returned to apprize his sovereigns how many tributary caciques there were in the island, leaving him in command, and that he had come to receive Behechio under the protection of these mighty sovereigns, and to ar-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., t. i., cap. 113.

range a tribute to be paid by him, in such manner as should be most convenient and satisfactory to himself*.

The cacique was greatly embarrassed by this demand, knowing the sufferings that had been inflicted on the other parts of the island by the avidity of the Spaniards for gold. He replied that he had been apprized that gold was the great object for which the white men had come to their island, and that a tribute was paid in it by some of his fellow-caciques; but that in no part of his territories was gold to be found; and his subjects hardly knew what it was. To this the Adelantado replied with great adroitness, that nothing was further from the intention or wish of his sovereigns than to require a tribute in things not produced in his dominions, but that it might be paid in cotton, hemp, and cassava bread, with which the surrounding country appeared to abound. The countenance of the cacique brightened at this intimation, he promised cheerful compliance, and instantly sent orders to all his subordinate caciques to sow abundance of cotton for the first payment

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 114.

of the stipulated tribute. Having made all the requisite arrangements, the Adelantado took the most friendly leave of Behechio and his sister, and set out for Isabella.

Thus, by amicable and sagacious management, one of the most extensive provinces of the island was brought into cheerful subjection, and, had not the wise policy of the Adelantado been defeated by the excesses of worthless and turbulent men, a large revenue might have been collected, without any recourse to violence or oppression. In all instances, these simple people appear to have been extremely tractable, and meekly and even cheerfully to have resigned their rights to the white men, when treated with gentleness and humanity.

CHAPTER II.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A CHAIN OF MILITARY POSTS. INSURRECTION OF GUARIONEX, THE CACIQUE OF THE VEGA.

[1496.]

On arriving at Isabella, Don Bartholomew found it, as usual, a scene of misery and repining. Many had died during his absence, most were ill. Those who were healthy complained of the scarcity of food, and those who were ill, of the want of medicines. The provisions which had been distributed among them, from the supplies brought out a few months before by Peralonzo Niño, had been consumed. The colonists, partly from sickness, and partly from a repugnance to labour, had neglected to cultivate the surrounding country, and the Indians, on whom they had chiefly depended, outraged by their oppressions, had abandoned the vicinity, and fled to the mountains; preferring to subsist on roots and herbs, in their rugged retreats, rather than remain in the luxuriant plains, subject to the wrongs and cruelties of the white

men. The history of this island presents continual pictures of the miseries, the actual want, and poverty produced by the grasping avidity of gold. It had rendered the Spaniards heedless of all the less obvious, but more certain and salubrious sources of wealth. All labour seemed lost that was to produce profit by a circuitous process. Instead of cultivating the luxuriant soil around them, and deriving real treasures from its surface, they thought only of golden streams, and were starving in the midst of fertility.

No sooner were the provisions exhausted which had been brought out by Niño, than the colonists began to break forth in their accustomed murmurs. They represented themselves as neglected by Columbus, who amidst the blandishments and delights of a court, thought little of their sufferings. They considered themselves equally forgotten by government; while, having no vessel in the harbour, they were destitute of all means of sending home intelligence of their disastrous situation, and of imploring relief.

To remove this last cause of discontent, and to furnish some object for their hopes and thoughts to

rally round, the Adelantado ordered that two caravels should be built at Isabella, for the use of the island. To relieve the settlement also, from all useless and repining individuals, during this time of scarcity, he distributed such as were too ill to labour, or to bear arms, into the interior, where they would have the benefit of a better climate, and more abundant supply of Indian provisions. He established, at the same time, a chain of military posts between Isabella and the new port of San Domingo. They consisted of five fortified houses, each surrounded by its dependent hamlets. The first of these was about nine leagues from Isabella, and was called la Esperanza. Six leagues beyond was Santa Catalina. Four leagues and a half farther, was Santiago; and five leagues farther Fort Conception—which was fortified with great care, being at the foot of the golden mountains of Cibao, in the vast and populous Vega, and within half a league from the residence of its cacique, Guarionex*. Having thus relieved Isabella of all its useless population, and left none but such as were too ill to be removed, or were required for

* P. Martyr, decad. 1, l. v.

the service and protection of the place, and the construction of the caravels, the Adelantado returned, with a large body of the most effective men, to the fortress of San Domingo.

The military posts thus established, succeeded for a time in overawing the natives ; but fresh hostilities soon began to be manifested, excited by a different cause from the preceding. Among the missionaries who had accompanied Friar Boyle to the island, were two of far greater zeal than their superior. When he returned to Spain, they remained behind, earnestly bent upon the fulfilment of their mission. One was called Roman Pane, a poor hermit, as he styled himself, of the order of St. Geronimo ; the other was Juan Borgoñon, a Franciscan. They resided for some time among the Indians of the Vega, strenuously endeavouring to make converts. They had succeeded with one family, consisting of sixteen persons, the chief of which, on being baptized, had taken the name of Juan Mateo. The conversion of the cacique Guarionex, however, was the great object of their pious labours. The extent and importance of his possessions made his conversion

of great importance to the interests of the colony; and the zealous fathers considered it a means of bringing his numerous subjects under the dominion of the church. For some time the cacique lent a willing ear; he learnt the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Creed, and made his whole family repeat them daily. The other caciques of the Vega and of the provinces of Cibao, however, reproached him, and scoffed at him for meanly conforming to the laws and customs of the strangers, who were usurpers of his possessions, and oppressors of his nation. The friars complained that, in consequence of these evil communications, their fancied convert suddenly relapsed into his infidelity; but another and more grievous cause is assigned for his recantation. His favourite wife was seduced or treated with outrage by one of the Spaniards of some authority; and the indignant cacique renounced all faith in a religion, which, as he supposed, admitted of such atrocities. Losing all hope of effecting the conversion of Guarionex, the missionaries removed to the territories of another cacique, taking with them Juan Mateo, their Indian convert. Before their departure, they

erected a small chapel, and furnished it with an altar, crucifix, and images, for the use of the family of Mateo.

The friars had scarcely departed, when several Indians entered the chapel, broke the images in pieces, trampled them under foot, and buried them in a neighbouring field. This, it was said, was done by order of Guarionex, in contempt of the holy religion from which he had apostatized. A complaint of this enormity was carried to the Adelantado, who ordered a suit to be immediately instituted, and those who were found culpable, to be punished according to the law. It was a period of great rigour in ecclesiastical law, especially among the Spaniards. In Spain, all heresies in religion, all recantations from the faith, and all acts of sacrilege, either by Moor or Jew, were punished with fire and faggot. Such was the fate of the poor ignorant Indians, convicted of this outrage on the church. It is questionable whether Guarionex had any hand in this offence, and it is probable that the whole affair was exaggerated. A proof of the credit due to the evidence brought forward, may be judged by one

of the facts recorded by Roman Pane, "the poor hermit." The field in which the holy images were buried, was planted, he says, with certain roots shaped like a turnip, or radish, several of which coming up in the neighbourhood of the images, were found to have grown most miraculously in the form of a cross*.

The cruel punishment inflicted on these Indians, instead of daunting their countrymen, filled them with horror and indignation. They had not been accustomed to such stern rule and vindictive justice, and having no clear ideas nor powerful sentiments with respect to religion of any kind, they could not comprehend the nature nor extent of the crime committed. Even Guarionex, a man naturally moderate and pacific, was highly incensed with the assumption of power within his territories, and the inhuman death inflicted on his subjects. The other caciques perceived his irritation, and endeavoured to induce him to unite in a sudden insurrection, that by one vigorous and general effort, they might break the yoke of their oppressors. Guarionex wavered for some time.

* Escritura de Fr. Roman, Hist. del Almirante.

He knew the martial skill and prowess of the Spaniards. He stood in awe of their cavalry, and he had before him the disastrous fate of Caonabo. But he was rendered bold by despair, and he beheld in the domination of these strangers the assured ruin of his race. The early writers speak of a tradition current among the inhabitants of the island, respecting this Guarionex. He was of an ancient line of hereditary caciques. His father, in times long preceding the discovery, having fasted for five days, according to their superstitious observances, applied to his zemi, or household deity, for information of things to come. He received for answer, that within a few years there should come to the island a nation covered with clothing, which should destroy all their customs and ceremonies, and should slay their children or reduce them to painful servitude*. The tradition was probably invented by the Butios, or priests of the Indians, after the Spaniards had begun to exercise their severities. Whether their prediction had an effect in disposing the mind of Guarionex to hostilites against the

* P. Martyr, decad. 1, lib. ix.

strangers is uncertain. Some have asserted, that he was compelled to take up arms by the importunities of his subjects, who still flattered themselves with the hope of success, and threatened, in case of his refusal, to choose some other chieftain; while others have alleged the outrage committed upon his favourite wife, as the principal cause of irritation*. It was probably all these things combined, which at length induced the unfortunate cacique to listen to the counsels of his neighbouring chieftains, and to enter into their conspiracy. A secret consultation was held among them, wherein it was concerted, that on the day of payment of their quarterly tribute, when a great number could assemble without causing suspicion, they should suddenly rise upon the Spaniards and massacre them†.

By some means the garrison at Fort Conception received intimation of this conspiracy. Being but a handful of men, and surrounded by hostile tribes, they were alarmed for their safety. They immediately despatched an Indian messenger to

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 121.

† Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 65. P. Martyr, decad. 6, l. v.

the Adelantado at San Domingo, begging immediate assistance. How to get this letter safe to his hands was an anxious question: their safety depended upon it. The Indian messenger might be intercepted, and the letter taken from him, for the natives had discovered that these letters had a wonderful power of communicating intelligence, and fancied that they could talk. The letter was, therefore, enclosed in a reed which the messenger used as a staff. He was, in fact, intercepted, but affected to be dumb and lame. He spoke only by signs, intimating that he was returning to his home, and leaning on his staff, limped along with extreme difficulty. He was suffered to depart, and dragged himself feebly forward until out of sight, when he resumed his speed, and bore the letter safely and expeditiously to San Domingo *.

The Adelantado, with his characteristic promptness and activity, immediately set out with a body of troops for the fortress; and though his men were much enfeebled by scanty fare, hard service, and long marches, hurried them rapidly forward.

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., c. 6.

Never did aid arrive more opportunely. The Indians were already assembled on the plain, to the amount of many thousands, armed after their manner, and waiting for the appointed time to strike the blow. After consulting with the commander of the fortress, and the other principal officers, the Adelantado concerted his mode of proceeding. Ascertaining the places in which the various caciques had distributed their forces, he appointed an officer with a body of men to each cacique, with orders, at an appointed hour of the night, to rush suddenly into the villages where they were sleeping, to surprise them unarmed and unsuspecting, and to bind the caciques and bring them off prisoners, before their subjects could assemble for their defence. As Guarionex was the most important personage, and his capture would probably be attended with most difficulty and danger, the Adelantado took the charge of it upon himself, at the head of one hundred men.

This sagacious stratagem, founded upon a knowledge of the attachment of the Indians to their chieftains, and calculated to spare a great

effusion of blood, was completely successful. The villages having no walls nor other defences, were quietly entered at midnight; and the Spaniards, rushing suddenly into the houses where the caciques were quartered, seized and bound them, to the number of fourteen, and hurried them off prisoners to the fortress, before any effort could be made for their defence or rescue. The Indians, struck with terror and confusion, made no resistance, nor any show of hostility; surrounding the fortress in great multitudes, but without weapons, they filled the air with doleful howlings and lamentations, imploring the release of their chieftains. The Adelantado completed his enterprise with the spirit, sagacity, and moderation with which he had hitherto conducted it. He obtained information of the causes which had led to this conspiracy, and of the individuals who had been most culpable. Two of the caciques, the principal movers of the insurrection, and who had most wrought upon the easy nature of Guarionex, were put to death. As to that unfortunate cacique, the Adelantado ascertained the deep wrongs he had suffered, and the slowness with which he had

been provoked to revenge. He magnanimously pardoned him; nay, according to Las Casas, he proceeded with stern justice against the Spaniard whose outrage on the wife of the cacique had sunk so deeply in his heart. The Adelantado extended his lenity also to the remaining chieftains of the conspiracy. Apprehensive that severe measures might incense their subjects, or drive them to despondency and induce them to abandon the Vega, he held forth to them promises of great favours and rewards, if they should continue firm in their loyalty; but terrible punishments, should they again be found in rebellion. The heart of Guarionex was subdued by the unexpected clemency of the Adelantado. He made a speech to his people, setting forth the irresistible might and valour of the Spaniards, their great lenity to offenders, and their generosity to such as were faithful; and he earnestly exhorted them henceforth to cultivate their friendship. The Indians listened to him with attention; his praises of the white men were confirmed in their minds by this great instance of moderation on the part of the Adelantado. When their cacique had concluded,

they took him up with transport on their shoulders, bore him to his habitation with songs and shouts of joy, and for some time the tranquillity of the Vega was restored *.

* Peter Martyr, d. 1, l. v. Herrera, Hist. Ind., d. 1, l. iii., c. 6.

CHAPTER III.

THE ADELANTADO REPAIRS TO XARAGUA TO RECEIVE TRIBUTE.

[1497.]

With all his energy and discretion, the Adelantado found it difficult to manage the proud and turbulent spirit of the Spanish colonists. Their discontents and their impatience of any salutary rule, increased day by day. They could ill brook the rigorous sway of a foreigner, who, when they attempted to be restive, curbed them with a firm and iron hand. Don Bartholomew had not the same legitimate authority in their eyes as his brother. The splendid reputation of the admiral gave dignity and grandeur to his name. He was the discoverer of the country, and the authorized representative of the sovereigns; yet even him they with difficulty brought themselves to obey. The Adelantado, however, was regarded by many of them as a mere intruder, shouldering himself into power on the merits and services of his bro-

ther, and possessing no authority from the crown for such high command. They spoke with impatience and indignation of the long absence of the admiral, and his fancied inattention to their wants; little aware of the incessant anxieties he was suffering on their account, during his detention in Spain. The sagacious measure of the Adelantado in building the caravels, for some time diverted their attention. They watched their progress with solicitude, looking upon them as a means either of obtaining relief, or of abandoning the island. Don Bartholomew was aware that repining and discontented men should never be left to idleness. He sought continual means of keeping them in movement; and indeed a state of constant activity was congenial to his own vigorous spirit. About this time, messengers arrived from Behechio, cacique of Xaragua, informing him that he had large quantities of cotton, and other articles, in which his tribute was to be paid, ready for delivery. The Adelantado immediately summoned a numerous train, who gladly set forth with him to revisit this fruitful and happy region. They were again received with songs and dances,

and all the national demonstrations of respect and amity by Behechio and his sister Anacaona. The latter appeared to be highly popular among the natives, and to have almost as much sway in Xaragua as her brother. Her natural ease, and the graceful dignity of her manners, more and more won the admiration of the Spaniards.

The Adelantado found thirty-two inferior caciques assembled in the house of Behechio, awaiting his arrival with their respective tributes. The cotton which they had brought amounted to so great a quantity, as to fill one of their houses. Having delivered this, they gratuitously offered the Adelantado to give him as much cassava bread as he desired. The offer was most acceptable in the present necessitous state of the colony; and Don Bartholomew sent to Isabella for one of the caravels, which was nearly finished, to be despatched as soon as possible to Xaragua, to be freighted with bread and cotton.

In the mean time, the utmost kindness was lavished on the Spaniards by these gentle and generous people; they brought from all quarters large supplies of provisions, and they entertained

their guests with continual festivity and banqueting. The early Spanish writers, whose imaginations were heated by the accounts of the voyagers, and who could not form an idea of the simplicity of savage life, especially in those parts which were supposed to border upon Asia, often speak in terms of oriental magnificence of the entertainments of the natives; the palaces of the caciques, and the lords and ladies of their courts, as if they were describing the abodes of Asiatic potentates. The accounts given of Xaragua, however, have a different character; and give a picture of savage life, in its perfection of indolent ease, and untasked enjoyment. The troubles which distracted the other parts of the devoted Hayti, had not yet reached the inhabitants of this pleasant region. Living among beautiful and fruitful groves, on the borders of a sea, which appeared for ever tranquil and unvexed by storms; having few wants, and those readily supplied, they appeared emancipated from the common lot of labour, and to pass their lives in one uninterrupted holiday. When the Spaniards regarded the fertility and sweetness of this country, the gentleness of its people, and

the beauty of its women, they pronounced it a perfect paradise.

At length the caravel arrived which was to be freighted with the articles of tribute. It anchored about six miles distant from the residence of Behechio, and Anacaona proposed to her brother that they should go together to behold what she called the great canoe of the white men. On their way to the coast, the Adelantado was lodged one night in a village, in a house where Anacaona treasured up those articles which she esteemed most rare and precious. They consisted of various manufactures of cotton ingeniously wrought; of chairs, tables, and other articles of furniture, formed of ebony and other kinds of wood,—all evincing great skill and ingenuity, in a people who had no iron tools to work with. Such were the simple treasures of this Indian princess, of which she generously made numerous presents to her guest.

Nothing could exceed the wonder and delight of this intelligent woman, when she first beheld the ship. Her brother, who treated her with a fraternal fondness and respectful attention, worthy of civilized life, had prepared two canoes,

gaily painted and decorated; one to convey her and her attendants, and the other for himself and his chieftains. Anacaona, however, preferred to embark, with her attendants, in the ship's boat with the Adelantado. As they approached the caravel, the cannon fired a salute. At the sound of this sudden thunder, and the sight of volumes of smoke bursting from the sides of the ship, and rolling along the sea, Anacaona, overcome with dismay, fell into the arms of the Adelantado, and her attendants would have leapt overboard in their affright. The laughter and the cheerful words of Don Bartholomew, however, speedily reassured them. As they drew nearer to the vessel, several instruments of martial music struck up, with which they were greatly delighted. Their admiration increased on entering on board of the caravel. Accustomed only to their simple and slight canoes, every thing here appeared to be wonderfully solid and complicated, and on a wonderful and vast scale. But when the anchor was weighed, the sails were spread, and, aided by a gentle breeze, they beheld this vast mass, moving apparently by its own volition, veering from side to side, and

playing like a huge monster in the deep, the brother and sister remained gazing at each other in mute astonishment*. Nothing seems to have filled the mind of the most stoical savage with more wonder, than that sublime and beautiful triumph of human genius, a ship under sail.

Having freighted and despatched the caravel, the Adelantado made many presents to Behechio, his sister, and their attendants, and took leave of them, to return by land with his troops to Isabella. Anacaona shewed great affliction at their parting, entreating him to remain some time longer with them, and appearing fearful that they had failed in their humble attempt to please him. She even offered to follow him to the settlement, nor would she be consoled, until he had promised to return again to Xaragua†.

It is impossible not to be struck with the great ability shewn by the Adelantado in the course of his transient government of the island. Wonderfully alert and active, he made repeated marches of great extent, from one remote province to ano-

* Peter Martyr, decad. 1, l. v. Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 6.

† Ramusio, v. iii., p. 9.

ther, and was always at the post of danger at the critical moment. By skilful management, he had, with a handful of men, defeated a formidable insurrection without any effusion of blood. He had conciliated the most inveterate enemies among the natives by his great moderation, while he deterred all wanton hostilities by the infliction of signal punishments. He had made firm friends of the most important princes, brought their dominions under cheerful tribute, and opened new sources of supplies for the colony, and procured relief from its immediate wants. Had his judicious measures been seconded by those under his command, the whole country would have been a scene of tranquil prosperity, and would have produced great revenues to the crown, without cruelty to the natives; but like his brother the admiral, his good intentions and judicious arrangements were constantly thwarted by the vile passions and perverse conduct of others. While he was absent from Isabella, new mischiefs had been fomented there, which were soon to throw the whole island into confusion.

CHAPTER IV.

CONSPIRACY OF ROLDAN.

[1497.]

The prime mover of the present mischief in the colony was one Francisco Roldan, a man who was under the deepest obligations to the admiral. Raised by him from poverty and obscurity, he had been employed at first in menial capacities; but, showing strong natural talents, and great assiduity, he had been made ordinary alcalde, equivalent to justice of the peace. The able manner in which he had acquitted himself in this situation, and the persuasion of his great fidelity and gratitude, had induced Columbus, on departing for Spain, to appoint him alcalde major, or chief judge of the island. It is true he was an uneducated man, but, as there were as yet no intricacies of law in the colony, the office required little else than shrewd good sense and upright principles for its discharge *.

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 1.

Roldan was one of those base spirits which grow venomous in the sunshine of prosperity. He had seen his benefactor return to Spain apparently under a cloud of disgrace; a long interval had elapsed without any tidings from him; he considered him a fallen man, and began to devise how he might profit by his downfal. He was intrusted with an office inferior only to that of the Adelantado; the brothers of Columbus were highly unpopular; he imagined it possible to ruin them, both with the colonists and with the government at home, and by dexterous cunning and bustling activity, to work his way into the command of the colony. The vigorous and somewhat austere character of the Adelantado for some time kept him in awe; but when he was absent from the settlement, Roldan was able to carry on his machinations with confidence. Don Diego, who then commanded at Isabella, was an upright and worthy man, but deficient in energy. Roldan felt himself his superior in talent and spirit, and his self-conceit was wounded at being inferior to him in authority. He soon made a party among the daring and dissolute of the community, and

secretly loosened the ties of order and good government, by listening to and encouraging the discontents of the common people, and directing them against the character and conduct of Columbus and his brothers. He had heretofore been employed as superintendent of various public works; this had brought him into habits of familiar communication with workmen, sailors, and others of the lower order. His originally vulgar character enabled him to adapt himself to their intellects and manners, while his present station gave him consequence in their eyes. Finding them full of murmurs about hard treatment, severe toil, and the long absence of the admiral, he affected to be moved by their distresses. He threw out suggestions that the admiral might never return, being disgraced and ruined in consequence of the representations of Aguado. He sympathized with the hard treatment they experienced from the Adelantado and his brother Don Diego, who, being foreigners, could take no interest in their welfare, nor feel a proper respect for the pride of a Spaniard; but who used them merely as slaves, to build houses

and fortresses for them, or to swell their state and secure their power, as they marched about the island enriching themselves with the spoils of the caciques. By this means he exasperated their feelings to such a height, that they had at one time formed a conspiracy to take away the life of the Adelantado, as the only means of delivering themselves from an odious tyrant. The time and place for the perpetration of the act were concerted. The Adelantado had condemned to death a Spaniard of the name of Berahona, a friend of Roldan, and of several of the conspirators. What was his offence is not positively stated, but from a passage in Las Casas, there is reason to believe that he was the very Spaniard who had violated the favourite wife of Guarionex, the cacique of the Vega. The Adelantado would be present at the execution. It was arranged, therefore, that when the populace were assembled, a tumult should be made as if by accident, and in the confusion of the moment, Don Bartholomew should be despatched with a poniard. Fortunately for the Adelantado, he pardoned the criminal, the

assemblage did not take place, and the plan of the conspirators was disconcerted *.

When Don Bartholomew was absent collecting the tribute in Xaraguå, Roldan thought it was a favourable time to bring affairs to a crisis. He had sounded the feelings of the colonists, and ascertained that there was a large party disposed for open sedition. His plan was to create a popular tumult, to interpose in his official character of alcalde mayor, to throw the blame upon the oppression and injustice of Don Diego and his brother, and, while he usurped the reins of authority, to appear as if actuated only by zeal for the peace and prosperity of the islands, and the interests of the sovereigns.

A pretext soon presented itself for the proposed tumult. When the caravel returned from Xaragua laden with the Indian tributes, and the cargo was discharged, Don Diego had the vessel drawn up on the land, to protect it from accidents, or from any sinister designs of the disaffected colonists. Roldan immediately pointed this circumstance out to his partisans. He secretly inveighed

* Hist. del. Almirante, cap. 73.

against the hardship of having this vessel drawn on shore, instead of being left afloat for the benefit of the colony, or sent to Spain to make known their distresses. He hinted that the true reason was the fear of the Adelantado and his brother, lest accounts should be carried to Spain of their misconduct, and he affirmed that they wished to remain undisturbed masters of the island, and keep the Spaniards there as subjects, or rather as slaves. The people took fire at these suggestions. They had long looked forward to the completion of the caravels as their only chance for relief; they now became openly clamorous, and insisted that the vessel should be launched and sent to Spain for supplies. Don Diego endeavoured to convince them of the folly of their demand, the vessel not being rigged and equipped for such a voyage; but the more he attempted to pacify them by fair words, the more unreasonable and turbulent they became. Roldan, also, became more bold and explicit in his instigations. He advised them to launch and take possession of the caravel, as the only mode of regaining their independence. They might then throw off the tyranny of these

upstart strangers, enemies in their hearts to the Spaniards, and might lead a life of ease and pleasure; sharing equally all that they might gain by barter in the island, employing the Indians as slaves to work for them, and enjoying unrestrained indulgence with respect to the Indian women *.

Don Diego received information of what was fermenting among the people, and of the various intrigues of Roldan; yet he feared to come to an open rupture in the present mutinous state of the colony. He suddenly detached him, therefore, with forty men, to the Vega, under pretext of overawing certain of the natives, who had refused to pay their tribute, and had shewn a disposition to revolt. Roldan made use of this opportunity to strengthen his faction. He made friends and partisans among the discontented caciques, secretly justifying them in their resistance to the imposition of tribute, and promising them redress. He secured the devotion of his own soldiers by great acts of indulgence, disarming and dismissing such as refused full participation in his plans,

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 73.

and returned with his little band to Isabella, where he felt secure of a strong party among the common people.

The Adelantado had by this time returned from Xaragua; but Roldan, feeling himself at the head of a strong faction, and arrogating to himself great authority from his official station, now openly demanded that the caravel should be launched, or permission given to himself and his followers to launch it. The Adelantado, irritated at his arrogance, peremptorily refused, observing that neither he nor his companions were mariners, nor was the caravel furnished and equipped for sea, and that neither the safety of the vessel, nor of the people, should be endangered by their attempt to navigate her.

Roldan perceived that his motives were suspected, and felt that the Adelantado was too formidable an adversary to contend with in any open sedition at Isabella. He determined, therefore, to carry his plans into operation in some more favourable part of the island, always trusting to excuse any open rebellion against the authority of Don Bartholomew, by representing it as a patri-

otic opposition to his tyranny over Spaniards. He had seventy well-armed and determined men under his command, and he trusted, on erecting his standard, to be joined by all the disaffected throughout the island. He set off suddenly, therefore, for the Vega, intending to surprise the fortress of Conception, and by getting command of that post and the rich country adjacent, to set the Adelantado at defiance.

He stopped, on his way, at various Indian villages in which the Spaniards were distributed, endeavouring to enlist the latter in his party, holding out promises of great gain and free living. He attempted also to seduce the natives from their allegiance, by promising them freedom from all tribute. Those caciques with whom he had maintained a previous understanding, received him with open arms, particularly one who had taken the name of Diego Marque, whose village he made his head-quarters, being about two leagues from Fort Conception. He was disappointed in his hopes of surprising the fortress. Its commander, Miguel Ballester, was an old and staunch soldier, both resolute and wary. He drew himself into his

stronghold on the approach of Roldan, and closed his gates. His garrison was small, but the fortification, situated on the side of a hill, with a river running at its foot, was proof against any assault. Roldan had still some hopes that Ballester might be disaffected to government, and might be gradually brought into his plans, or that the garrison would be disposed to desert, tempted by the licentious life which he permitted among his followers. In the neighbourhood was the town inhabited by Guarionex. Here were quartered thirty soldiers, under the command of captain Garcia de Barrantes. Roldan repaired thither with his armed force, hoping to enlist Barrantes and his party; but the captain shut himself up with his men in a fortified house, refusing to permit them to hold any communication with Roldan. The latter threatened to set fire to the house; but after a little consideration, contented himself with seizing their store of provisions, and then marched towards Fort Conception, which was not quite half a league distant *.

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii. c. 7. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 74.

CHAPTER V.

THE ADELANTADO REPAIRS TO THE VEGA IN RELIEF OF FORT CONCEPTION. HIS INTERVIEW WITH ROLDAN.

[1497.]

The Adelantado had received intelligence of the flagitious proceedings of Roldan; yet for a time he hesitated to set out in pursuit of him. He had lost all confidence in the loyalty of the people around him; he knew not how far the conspiracy extended, nor on whom he could rely. Diego de Escobar, alcalde of the fortress of La Madalena, together with Adrian de Moxica and Pedro de Valdiviesso, all principal men, were in league with Roldan. He feared that the commander of Fort Conception might likewise be in the plot, and the whole island in arms against him. He was re-assured, however, by tidings from Miguel Ballester. That loyal veteran wrote to him pressing letters for succour; representing the weakness of his garrison, and the increasing forces of the rebels.

Don Bartholomew now hastened to his assistance with his accustomed promptness, and threw himself with a reinforcement into the fortress. Being ignorant of the force of the rebels, and doubtful of the loyalty of his own followers, he determined to adopt mild measures. Understanding that Roldan was quartered at a village but half a league distant, he sent a messenger to him, remonstrating on the flagrant irregularity of his conduct, the injury it was calculated to produce in the island, and the certain ruin it must bring upon himself. He summoned him to appear at the fortress, pledging his word for his personal safety. Roldan repaired accordingly to Fort Conception, where the Adelantado held a parley with him from a window, demanding the reason of his appearing in arms, in opposition to royal authority. Roldan replied boldly, that he was in the service of his sovereigns, defending their subjects from the oppression of men who sought their destruction. The Adelantado ordered him to surrender his staff of office, as alcalde mayor, and to submit peaceably to superior authority. Roldan refused to resign his office, or to put himself in

the power of Don Bartholomew, whom he charged with seeking his life. He refused also to submit to any trial, unless commanded by the king. Pretending, however, to make no resistance to the peaceable exercise of authority, he offered to go with his followers, and reside at any place the Adelantado might appoint. The latter immediately designated the village of the cacique Diego Colon, the same native of the Lucayos Islands who had been baptized in Spain, and had since married a daughter of Guarionex. Roldan objected, pretending there were not sufficient provisions to be had there for the subsistence of his men, and departed, declaring that he would seek a more eligible residence elsewhere *.

He now proposed to his followers to establish themselves, and take possession of the remote province of Xaragua. The Spaniards who had returned from thence had given voluptuous accounts of the life they had led there; of the fertility of the soil, the sweetness of the climate, the hospitality and gentleness of the people, their feasts, dances, and various amusements, and, above

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 7. Hist. del Almirante, c. 74.

all, the beauty of the women; for they had been captivated by the naked charms of the dancing nymphs of Xaragua. In this delightful region, emancipated from the iron rule of the Adelantado, and relieved from the necessity of irksome labour, they might lead a life of perfect freedom and indulgence, and have a world of beauty at their command. In short, Roldan drew a picture of loose sensual enjoyment, such as he knew to be irresistible with men of idle and dissolute habits. His followers acceeded with joy to his proposition. Some preparations, however, were necessary to carry it into effect. Taking advantage of the absence of the Adelantado, he suddenly marched off with his band to Isabella, and entering it in a manner by surprise, endeavoured to launch the caravel, with which they might sail to Xaragua. Don Diego Columbus hearing the tumult, issued forth with several persons of distinction; but such was the force of the mutineers and their menacing conduct, that he was obliged to withdraw, with a number of his faithful adherents, into the fortress. Roldan held several parleys with him, and offered to submit to his command, provided

he would set himself up in opposition to his brother the Adelantado. His proposition was treated with scorn. The fortress was too strong to be assailed with success; he found it impossible to launch the caravel, and feared the Adelantado might return, and he be enclosed between two forces. He proceeded, therefore, in all haste to make provisions for the proposed expedition to Xaragua. Still pretending to act in his official capacity, and to do every thing from loyal motives, for the protection and support of the oppressed subjects of the crown, he broke open the royal warehouse, with shouts of "Long live the king!" supplied his followers with arms, ammunition, clothing, and whatever they desired from the public stores; proceeded to the enclosure where the cattle and other European animals were kept to breed, took whatever he thought necessary for his intended establishment, and permitted his followers to kill such of the remaining cattle as they might want for present supply. Having committed this wasteful ravage, he marched in triumph out of Isabella*. Reflecting, however, on

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 74. Herrera, decad. 1, lib. iii., c. 7.

the prompt and vigorous character of the Adelantado, he felt that his situation would be but little secure with such an active enemy behind him; who, on extricating himself from present perplexities, would not fail to pursue him to his proposed paradise of Xaragua. He determined, therefore, to march again to the Vega, and endeavour either to get possession of the person of the Adelantado, or to strike some blow at him, in his present crippled state, that should disable him from offering further molestation. Returning, therefore, to the vicinity of Fort Conception, he endeavoured in every way, by the means of subtle emissaries, to seduce the garrison to desertion, or to excite it to revolt.

The Adelantado had ample information of the machinations of the enemy, and of his own personal danger. He dared not take the field with his forces, having no confidence in their fidelity. He knew that they listened wistfully to the emissaries of Roldan, and contrasted the meagre fare and stern discipline of the garrison, with the abundant cheer and easy misrule that prevailed among the rebels. To counteract these seductions, he relaxed from his usual strictness, treating his

men with great indulgence, and promising them large rewards. By these means, he was enabled to maintain some degree of loyalty amongst his forces, his service having an advantage over that of Roldan, as being on the side of government and law.

Finding that his attempts to corrupt the garrison were unsuccessful, and fearing some sudden sally from the vigorous Adelantado, Roldan drew off to a distance, and sought by all insidious means to strengthen his own power, and weaken that of the government. He asserted equal right to manage the affairs of the island with the Adelantado, and pretended to have separated from him on account of his being passionate and vindictive in the exercise of his authority. He represented him as the tyrant of the Spaniards, the oppressor of the Indians. For himself, he assumed the character of a redressor of grievances and champion of the injured. He pretended to feel a patriotic indignation at the affronts heaped upon Spaniards by a family of obscure and arrogant foreigners; and professed to free the natives from tributes wrung from them by these rapacious men for their own enrichment, and contrary to the beneficent inten-

tions of the Spanish monarchs. He connected himself closely with the Carib cacique, Maconiatex, brother of the late Caonabo, whose son and nephew were in his possession as hostages for payment of tributes. This warlike chieftain he conciliated by presents and caresses, bestowing on him the appellation of brother *. In fact, the unhappy natives, deceived by his professions, and overjoyed at the idea of having a protector in arms for their defence, submitted cheerfully to a thousand impositions, supplying his followers with provisions in abundance, and bringing to Roldan all the gold they could collect; voluntarily yielding him heavier tributes than those from which he pretended to free them.

The affairs of the island were now in a lamentable situation. The Indians, perceiving the dissensions among the white men, and encouraged by the protection of Roldan, began to throw off all allegiance to the government. The caciques at a distance ceased to send in their tributes, and those who were in the vicinity were excused by the Adelantado, that by indulgence he might retain

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., cap. 118.

their friendship in this time of danger. Roldan's faction daily gained strength; they ranged insolently and at large in the open country, and were supported by the misguided natives, while the Spaniards who remained loyal, fearing conspiracies among the natives, had to keep under shelter of the fort, or in the strong houses which they had erected in the villages. The commanders were obliged to palliate all kinds of slights and indignities, both from their soldiers and from the Indians, fearful of driving them to sedition by any severity. The clothing and munitions of all kinds, either for maintenance or defence, were rapidly wasting away, and the want of all supplies or tidings from Spain was sinking the spirits of the well-affected into despondency. The Adelantado was shut up in Fort Conception, in daily expectation of being openly besieged by Roldan, and secretly informed that means were taken to destroy him, should he issue from the walls of the fortress *.

Such was the desperate state to which the colony was reduced, in consequence of the long detention of Columbus in Spain, and the impediments

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 119.

thrown in the way of all his measures for the benefit of the island by the delays of cabinets and the chicanery of Fonseca and his satellites. At this critical juncture, when faction reigned triumphant, and the colony was on the brink of ruin, tidings were brought to the Vega that Pero Hernandez Coronal had arrived at the port of San Domingo, with two ships, bringing supplies of all kind, and a strong reinforcement of troops *.

* Las Casas. Herrera. Hist. del Almirante.

CHAPTER VI.

SECOND INSURRECTION OF GUARIONEX, AND HIS FLIGHT TO THE MOUNTAINS OF CIGUAY.

[1498.]

The arrival of Coronal took place on the third of February, 1498; it was the salvation of the colony. The reinforcements of troops, and the supplies of all kinds, strengthened the hands of Don Bartholomew. The royal confirmation of his title and authority as Adelantado at once dispelled all aspersions as to the legitimacy of his power, and confirmed the fidelity of his adherents; and the tidings that the admiral was in high favour at court, and would soon arrive with a powerful squadron, struck consternation into those who had entered into the rebellion on the presumption of his having fallen into disgrace.

The Adelantado no longer remained mewed up in his fortress, but set out immediately for San Domingo with a part of his troops, although a very superior rebel force was at the village of

the cacique Guarionex, at a very short distance. Roldan followed slowly and gloomily with his party, anxious to ascertain the truth of these tidings, to make partisans, if possible, among those who had newly arrived, and to take advantage of every circumstance that might befriend his rash and hazardous projects. The Adelantado left strong guards on the passes of the roads to prevent his near approach to San Domingo, but Roldan paused within a few leagues of the place.

When the Adelantado found himself secure in San Domingo with this augmentation of force, and the prospect of a still greater reinforcement at hand, his magnanimity prevailed over his indignation, and he sought by gentle means to allay the popular seditions, that the island might be restored to tranquillity before his brother's arrival. He considered that the colonists had suffered greatly from the want of supplies; that their discontents had been heightened by the severities he had been compelled to inflict; and that many had been led to rebellion by doubts of the legitimacy of his authority. While, therefore, he proclaimed the royal act sanctioning his title and powers, he

promised also amnesty for all past offences, on condition of immediate return to allegiance. Hearing that Roldan was within five leagues of San Domingo with his band, he sent Pero Hernandez Coronal, who had been appointed by the sovereigns alguazil mayor of the island, to exhort him to obedience, promising him oblivion of the past. He trusted that the representations of a discreet and honourable man like Coronal, who had been witness of the favour in which his brother stood in Spain, would convince the rebels of the hopelessness of their course.

Roldan, however, conscious of his guilt, and doubtful of the clemency of Don Bartholomew, feared to venture within his power; he determined, also, to prevent his followers from communicating with Coronal, lest they should be seduced from him by the promise of pardon. When that emissary, therefore, approached the encampment of the rebels, he was opposed in a narrow pass by a body of archers, with their cross-bows levelled. "Halt there! traitor!" cried Roldan, "had you arrived eight days later, we should all have been one*."

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 8.

It was in vain that Coronal endeavoured by fair reasoning and earnest entreaty to win this perverse and turbulent man from his career. Roldan answered with hardihood and defiance, professing to oppose only the tyranny and misrule of the Adelantado, but to be ready to submit to the admiral on his arrival. He, and several of his principal confederates, wrote letters to the same effect to their friends in San Domingo, urging them to plead their cause with the admiral when he should arrive, and to assure him of their disposition to acknowledge his authority.

When Coronal returned with accounts of Roldan's contumacy, the Adelantado proclaimed him and his followers traitors. That shrewd rebel, however, did not suffer his men to remain within either the seduction of promise or the terror of menace; he immediately set out on his march for his promised land of Xaragua, trusting in its soft witcheries to dissolve evey honest principle and virtuous tie of his misguided followers by a life of indolence and libertinage.

In the mean time the mischievous effects of his intrigues among the caciques became more and

more apparent. No sooner had the Adelantado left Fort Conception, than a conspiracy was formed among the natives to surprise it. Guarionex was at the head of this conspiracy, moved by the instigations of Roldan, who had promised him protection and assistance, and led on by the forlorn hope in this distracted state of the Spanish forces, to relieve his paternal domains from the intolerable domination of usurping strangers. Holding secret communications with his tributary caciques, it was concerted that they should all rise simultaneously upon the soldiery, who were quartered in small parties in their villages, and should put them to death, while he, with a chosen force, should surprise the fortress of Conception in the present weak state of the garrison. As the Indians might make a mistake in the appointed time, the night of the full moon was fixed upon for the insurrection.

One of the principal caciques, however, not being a correct observer of the heavenly bodies, took up arms before the appointed night. He was repulsed by the soldiers quartered in his village. The alarm was given, and the Spaniards were all

put on the alert. The cacique fled to Guarionex for protection, but the chieftain, full of indignation and despair, put him to death upon the spot.

No sooner did the Adelantado hear of this fresh conspiracy, than he again put himself on the march for the Vega with a strong body of men. Guarionex did not await his coming. He saw that every attempt was fruitless to shake off these strangers, who had settled like a curse upon his territories. He found their friendship no less destructive than their enmity, and he now dreaded their vengeance. Abandoning, therefore, his rightful and beautiful domain, the once happy Vega, he fled with his family and a small band of faithful followers to the mountains of Ciguay. This is a lofty chain, extending along the north side of the island, between the Vega and the sea. The inhabitants were the most robust and hardy tribe of the island, and far more formidable than the mild inhabitants of the plains. It was a part of this tribe which displayed hostility to the Spaniards in the course of the first voyage of Columbus, and in a skirmish with them in the Gulf of Semana the first drop of native blood had been shed in the New World. The reader

may remember the frank and confiding conduct of these people the day after the skirmish, and the intrepid faith with which their cacique trusted himself on board of the caravel of the admiral, and in the power of the Spaniards. It was to this same cacique, named Mayobanex, that the fugitive chieftain of the Vega now applied for refuge. He came to his residence at an Indian town near Cape Cabron, about ten leagues west of Isabella, and implored shelter for his wife and children, and his handful of loyal followers. The noble minded cacique of the mountains received him with open arms. He not only gave an asylum to his family, but he pledged himself to stand by him in his distress, to defend his cause, and share his desperate fortunes *. Men in civilized life learn magnanimity from precept, but their most generous actions are often rivalled by the deeds of untutored savages, who act only from natural impulse.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., c. 121, MS. Peter Martyr, decad. 1, c. v.

CHAPTER VII.

CAMPAIGN OF THE ADELANTADO IN THE MOUNTAINS OF CIGUAY.

[1498.]

Aided by his mountain ally, and by bands of hardy Ciguayans, Guarionex made several descents into the plain, cutting off straggling parties of the Spaniards, laying waste the villages of the natives who continued in allegiance to them, and destroying the fruits of the earth. The arrival of the Adelantado put a stop to these molestations; but he determined to root out so formidable an adversary from the neighbourhood. Shrinking from no danger nor fatigue, and leaving nothing to be done by others, which he could do himself, he set forth in the spring with a band of ninety men, a few cavalry, and a body of Indians, to penetrate among the wild fastnesses of the Ciguay mountains.

After passing a steep defile, rendered almost impracticable for troops by rugged rocks and exuberant vegetation, he descended into a beautiful

valley or plain, extending along the coast, and embosomed by the mountains which advanced towards the sea. His advance into the country was watched by the keen eyes of Indian scouts, who lurked among the rocks and thickets. As the Spaniards were seeking the ford of a river at the entrance of the plain, two of these spies darted from among the bushes on its bank. One flung himself headlong into the water, and swimming across the mouth of the river escaped; the other being taken, gave information that six thousand Indians lay in ambush on the opposite shore, waiting to attack them as they crossed.

The Adelantado advanced with caution, and finding a shallow place entered the river with his troops. They were scarcely midway in the stream when the savages, hideously painted, and looking more like fiends than men, burst from ther concealment. The forest rang with their yells and howlings. They discharged a shower of arrows and lances, by which, notwithstanding the protection of their targets, many of the Spaniards were wounded. The Adelantado, however, forced his way across the river, and the Indians took to

flight. Some were killed, but their swiftness of foot, their knowledge of the forest, and their dexterity in darting and winding through the most tangled thickets, enabled the greater number to elude the pursuit of the Spaniards, who were encumbered with armour, targets, cross-bows and lances.

By the advice of one of his Indian guides, the Adelantado pressed forward along the valley to reach the residence of Mayobanex, at Cabron. In the way he had several skirmishes with the natives, who would suddenly rush forth from ambuscades among the bushes, discharge their weapons with furious war-cries, and take refuge again in the fastnesses of their rocks and forests, inaccessible to the Spaniards.

Having taken several prisoners, the Adelantado sent one accompanied by an Indian of a friendly tribe, as a messenger to Mayobanex, demanding the surrender of Guarionex—promising friendship and protection in case of compliance, but threatening, in case of refusal, to lay waste his territory with fire and sword. The cacique listened attentively to the messenger: when he had finished,

"Tell the Spaniards," said he, "that they are bad men, cruel and tyrannical; usurpers of the territories of others, and shedders of innocent blood I desire not the friendship of such men; Guarionex is a good man, he is my friend, he is my guest, he has fled to me for refuge, I have promised to protect him, and I will keep my word."

When the messengers brought this magnanimous reply, or rather defiance, the Adelantado saw that nothing was to be gained by friendly overtures. When severity was required, he could be a stern soldier. He immediately ordered the village in which he had been quartered, and several others in the neighbourhood, to be set on fire. He then sent further messengers to Mayobanex, warning him that, unless he delivered up the fugitive cacique, his whole dominions should be laid waste in like manner; and he would see nothing in every direction but the smoke and flames of his burning villages. The unhappy Ciguayans, beholding the destruction which threatened to overwhelm them, cursed the day in which Guarionex had taken refuge among them. They surrounded their chieftain with clamorous

lamentations, urging that the fugitive should be given up for the salvation of the country. The generous cacique was inflexible. He reminded them of the many virtues of Guarionex, of the sacred claims he had on their hospitality, he declared that he was ready to abide all evils, rather than it should ever be said Mayobanex had betrayed his guest.

The people retired with sorrowful hearts, and the chieftain, summoning Guarionex into his presence, again pledged his word to stand by him and protect him, though it should cost him his dominions. He sent no reply to the Adelantado, and lest any further messages might be brought to tempt the fidelity of his subjects, he placed men in ambush, with orders to slay any messengers who might approach. They had not lain in wait long, before they beheld two men advancing through the forest, one of whom was a captive Ciguayan, and the other an Indian ally of the Spaniards. They were both instantly slain. The Adelantado was following at no great distance, with only ten foot soldiers and four horsemen. When he found his messengers lying dead in the forest path,

transfixed with arrows, he was greatly exasperated, and resolved to deal rigorously with this obstinate tribe. He advanced, therefore, with all his force to Cabron, where Mayobanex and his army were quartered. At his approach the inferior caciques and their adherents, overcome by their terror of the Spaniards, fled with the utmost rapidity. When the unfortunate Mayobanex found himself thus deserted, he took refuge with his family in a secret part of the mountains. Several of the Ciguayans sought for Guarionex, to kill him or deliver him up as a propitiatory offering, but he fled to the heights, where he wandered about alone, in the most savage and desolate places.

The luxuriance of the forests and the ruggedness of the mountains rendered this expedition excessively painful and laborious, and protracted it far beyond the time that the Adelantado had contemplated. His men suffered, not merely from fatigue, but hunger. The natives had all fled to the mountains; their villages remained empty and desolate; all the provisions of the Spaniards consisted of cassava bread, and such roots and herbs as their Indian allies could gather for them, with

now and then a few utias taken with the assistance of their dogs. They slept almost always on the ground, in the open air, under the trees, exposed to the heavy dew which falls in this climate. For three months they were thus pursuing their warfare amongst the mountains until almost worn out with toil and hard fare. Many of them had farms in the neighbourhood of Fort Conception which required their attention; they, therefore, entreated permission, since the Indians were terrrified and dispersed, to return to their abodes in the Vega.

The Adelantado granted many of them passports and an allowance out of the scanty stock of bread which remained. Retaining only thirty men, he resolved with these to search every den and cavern of the mountains until he should find the two caciques. It was difficult, however, to trace them in such a wilderness. There was no one to give a clue to their retreat: the whole country was abandoned. There were the habitations of men, but not a human being to be seen; or if, by chance, they caught some wretched Indian stealing forth from the mountains in quest of food, he always professed utter ignorance of the hiding-place of the caciques.

It happened, one day, however, that several Spaniards, while hunting utias, captured two of the followers of Mayobanex, who were on their way to a distant village in search of bread. They were taken to the Adelantado, who compelled them to betray the place of concealment of their chieftain, and to act as guides. Twelve Spaniards volunteered to go in quest of him. Stripping themselves naked, staining and painting their bodies so as to look like Indians, and wrapping their swords in palm-leaves, they were conducted by the guides to the retreat of the unfortunate Mayobanex. They came secretly upon him, and found him surrounded by his wife and children and a few of his household, totally unsuspicious of danger. Drawing their swords, the Spaniards rushed upon them and made them all prisoners. When these prisoners were brought to the Adelantado, he gave up all further search after Guarionex, and returned to Fort Conception.

Among the prisoners thus taken was the sister of Mayobanex. She was the wife of another cacique of the mountains, whose territories had never yet been visited by the Spaniards, and she

was reputed to be one of the most beautiful women of the island. Tenderly attached to her brother, she had abandoned the security of her own dominions, and had followed him among rocks and precipices, participating in all his hardships, and comforting him with a woman's sympathy and kindness. When the cacique, her husband, who tenderly loved her, heard of her captivity, he was distracted with grief, and hastening to the Adelantado, offered to submit himself and all his possessions to his sway, if his wife might be restored to him. The Adelantado accepted his offer of allegiance, and released this Indian beauty, together with several of his subjects whom he had captured. The cacique kept his word; he became a firm and valuable ally of the Spaniards, cultivating large tracts of land, and supplying them with great quantities of bread and other provisions.

Kindness appears never to have been lost upon this gentle people. When this act of clemency reached the Ciguayans, they came in multitudes to the fortress, bringing presents of various kinds, promising allegiance, and imploring the release

of Mayobanex and his family. The Adelantado granted their prayers in part, releasing the wife and household of the cacique, but still detaining him prisoner to ensure the fidelity of his subjects.

In the mean time the unfortunate Guarionex, who had been hiding in the wildest parts of the mountains, was driven by hunger to venture down occasionally into the plain in quest of food. The Ciguayans looking upon him as the cause of their misfortunes, and perhaps hoping by his sacrifice to procure the release of their chieftain, betrayed his haunts to the Adelantado. A party was immediately despatched to secure him. They lay in wait in the path by which he usually returned to the mountains. As the unhappy cacique, after one of his famished excursions, was returning to his den among the cliffs, he was surprised by the lurking Spaniards, and brought in chains to Fort Conception. After his repeated insurrections, and the extraordinary zeal and perseverance displayed in his pursuit, Guarionex expected nothing less than death from the vengeance of the Adelantado. Don Bartholomew, however, though stern in his policy, was neither vindictive nor cruel in his na-

ture. He considered the tranquillity of the Vega sufficiently secured by the captivity of the cacique; and he ordered him to be detained a prisoner and hostage in the fortress. The Indian hostilities in this important part of the island being thus brought to a conclusion, and precautions taken to prevent their recurrence, Don Bartholomew returned to the city of San Domingo, where, shortly after his arrival, he had the happiness of receiving his brother, the admiral, after nearly two years and six months' absence *.

Such was the active, intrepid, and sagacious, but turbulent and disasterous administration of the Adelantado, in which we find evidences of the great capacity, the mental and bodily vigour of this self-formed and almost self-taught man. He united, in a singular degree, the sailor, the soldier, and the legislator. Like his brother, the admiral, his mind and manners rose immediately to the level of his situation, shewing no arrogance or ostentation, and exercising the sway of sudden and extraordinary power, with the sobriety and

* The particulars of this chapter are chiefly from P. Martyr, decad. 1, l. vi. The manuscript history of Las Casas, l. i., p. 121; and Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., c. 8, 9.

moderation of one who had been born to rule. He has been accused of severity in his government, but no instance appears of a cruel or wanton abuse of authority. If he was stern towards the factious Spaniards, he was just; the disasters of his administration were not produced by his own rigour, but by the perverse passions of others, which called for its exercise: and the admiral, who had more suavity of manner and benevolence of heart, was not more fortunate in conciliating the good will, and ensuring the obedience of the colonists. The character of Don Bartholomew does not appear to have been sufficiently appreciated by the world; less adventurous, less amiable, and less magnanimous, than his brothers, he did not yield to them in boldness and heroism.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.